Deafness and Cheerfulness

By A. W. Jackson

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DEAFNESS

AND

CHEERFULNESS

By

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"James Martineau: A Biography and Study"

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MEADVILLE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

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By A. W. Jackson

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BY
MOONLIGHT

To

CLARENCE J. BLAKE

My "Beloved Physician"

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I

A PREFATORY WORD

DEAFNESS & CHEERFULNESS

I

A Prefatory Word

I HAVE a mind to write to my fellow-sufferers, the deaf. Some may think it dubious enterprise to turn infirmity into literature; and they may fling in my face the dictum of Emerson, "Beware how you unmuzzle a valetudinarian." And it may well be confessed that were it to become the vogue of letters to deal with the ills that flesh is heir to, the result could not be a happy one. Think of the books that would be thrust upon us: "To my Consumptive Friend," "The Consolations of Liver Complaint," "Reveries of a Dyspeptic." Physicians would be cross-examined and hospital records would be explored for the telling illustration of the chosen malady. In our reading hours we should have constantly to

do with the nurse and the doctor; our literary acquaintances would be men and women of the bent form, the sunken eye, the hollow cheek, the saffron hue. All of which I say in order to say that not even to the extent of this slight volume would I offend in this direction. The noblest dealing with misfortune is in manly silence to bear it; the next to the meanest is in feebleness to weep over it; the wholly unpardonable is to ask others to weep also. And I should feel that I was committing this unpardonable sin if I were to write of deafness simply to make literature of its sufferings.

The purpose, indeed, for which I address my fellow-sufferers is to brace them, cheer them, reconcile them. I aim not to tell a tale or to paint a picture, but to preach a sermon. To be sure, it will be an extremely unconventional sermon, somewhat of the nature of a prayer-meeting experience supplemented with an exhortation. From long experience of deafness, I cannot doubt that I know the outer sufferings, the inner griefs, of those who are smitten with it; and though

I may not have followed, I am sure I have seen, and can trust myself to point out, the way of wisdom in dealing with it. For a very great number of the incurably deaf the chief help is in a large sense moral, and with this I would reach them. I shall indulge little in pity, — that I reserve for children, not proffer men; but I shall appeal to courage and faith and fortitude. The experience of the deaf is hard, far harder than any but a fellow-sufferer can know; I would bear in upon them the thought once borne in upon me by a beloved physician: "This is bad, very bad indeed, and not unlikely it will become worse; but has the thought occurred to you that it is a very poor bushel under which to hide your candle?"

And one thing more will be undertaken in these pages. The deaf have not only griefs, but also grievances; they suffer directly from their infirmity, and scarcely less from the treatment of those about them. This treatment, however mistaken, is almost never the offspring of unkindly purpose; yet no innocence of intent quite neutralizes

its pang. Accordingly, while speaking *to* the deaf I shall also speak *for* them. Shifting here and there the point of view, I shall seek to show to those who meet them in their walk the way of dealing that shall spare them wounds and shed a brightness on their path.

II

UNCONSCIOUS DEAFNESS

II

Unconscious Deafness

I ONCE asked an aurist of wide experience what proportion of an average community he would expect to find deaf. His prompt answer was, "More than sixty per cent." This was startling information, and my surprise drew from him this explanation: "We judge from different standards. Your deaf people are those who are noticeably deaf; mine are those whose hearing, as proved by my tests, is below normal. Now nature has given us more than twice the hearing capacity needed in the ordinary contacts of life; so that, as a rule, one must lose more than half his hearing before he is conscious of the loss of any. My tests, however, make plain the earlier stages of the bad way, and justify my conclusion that those with less than normal hearing are the majority, not the few."

Further conversation brought out certain facts, the prevailing ignorance of which should, if possible, be dissipated. Perhaps the majority of mankind are deaf but *do not know it*. It is the good fortune of many never to know it. The infirmity creeps on so slowly that a full life is lived ere it reaches the stage of conscious disability. Yet there it is, slowly and insidiously progressing, and gaining ever and ever a hold that is more unrelenting. To be sure there are forms of deafness of which such is not the history; — hearing may be almost at once destroyed by disease or accident. In a majority of cases, however, there is a considerable period of years between the beginning of deafness and its manifestation in imperfect hearing. It creeps on, a slow-footed fate, but makes no sign. When at length the patient consults an aurist, he thinks he has a slight deafness, which he hopes may be easily and speedily remedied; whereas the sad truth is that his hearing is more than half destroyed, and his malady is past remedy because from long standing it has become organic.

These are very serious facts, and there are practical reasons why they should be more generally known. First, there is possible injustice that may result from ignorance of them. I have in mind an illustrative instance; the reader in casting about may very likely find others. There is a man living whom this country owes a considerable sum, which it is not probable that either he or his heirs will ever receive. He gave her four years of faithful and arduous service during the terrible struggle of the Civil War. Soon after his return home deafness came upon him, at first very slight and for some time remaining so. At length, however, it grew worse, and in time drove him from all lucrative employment. As his case under the diagnosis of experts pointed clearly back to his military experience, he made application for a pension. His case was clearly pensionable in the intent of the pension law, and simple justice plead earnestly in his favor. His affidavit, however, showed that he was not made aware of his deafness until three weeks after leaving the army. The

reviewer of his papers at Washington may not have been a practical farmer ; yet had he been shown a field of wheat ready for the harvest, it would probably have been difficult to convince him that the seed had been sown within the period of three weeks. But he had not the wit to see that this deafness when it became apparent to the sufferer must have had existence for a period during which more than one wheat crop might have been matured; and the ground was taken that because the ex-soldier did not know of his deafness until three weeks after leaving the military service there was no proof that it was incurred there. From a conviction that this decision must have been an official blunder, a second application was made, and the pension was a second time refused on the same ground. The ex-soldier lost his pension in consideration of those three weeks, which to a properly instructed official could have counted for nothing at all. Pension was given him several years later by special act of Congress ; but there are the previous unpensioned years, the rightful due of which is his

costly charge for official inability to see that unconscious deafness must often be, and in this case must have been, a prelude to conscious.

Secondly, there is a possible protection from a most insidious peril,—not a royal one, but a very real one,—which a knowledge of these facts brings home to us. Of a hundred people whom I may meet in a morning, not one may be as deaf as I am; but, as I often reflect, more than half of them have entered upon the way that leads to my unenviable distinction. They do not suspect it, and so from fancied security take no precaution. Yet precaution not only could be taken, but would be in accord with our conduct in other relations where possible loss is intrinsically less grievous and its liability less exigent. Thus we insure our houses, our furniture, our merchandise, providing against a contingency which to the average of human experience is very improbable. Many keep regular appointment with a dentist, paying him often for simply telling them that they have no need of him, but to the end that he may discover in

season the condition that shall demand his skill. And why not in like manner insure our hearing by an occasional consultation with an aurist, paying him, we will say, a biennial visit? Time after time he may declare the hearing perfect; but there may come a time when he will report an incipient malady, and prescribe a remedy while the case is yet remedial. We shall do thus when the significance of the aurist's testimony is practically taken home. Such insurance might cost us in the period of thirty years an aggregate sum of seventy-five dollars, — certainly a cheap outlay for protection against a malady so insidious and so grave. To many there is something irksome in the thought of thus keeping watch over themselves. It has its analogy, however, in the night by night locking of the door against the thief that has never come; in the police we set to patrol our city streets that the burglar may not circumvent us or the ruffian assault us; in the board of health which are given authority over us that they may hold the epidemic away from us.

III

EARLY EXPERIENCE OF DEAFNESS

III

Early Experience of Deafness

WHETHER or not unconscious deafness is attended with peculiar physical or mental experiences I cannot say. Looking back upon my history, I am inclined to think it may be; but in calling up the distant past it is hardly safe to connect remembered moods with a condition that at the time was hidden and unsuspected. When deafness reaches the conscious stage, however, — has ceased, that is, to be hidden and has become obtrusive, — then experiences begin of which deepening years are but the lengthened tale. I suppose that most at first resent the suggestion that they are growing deaf. I did so; indeed it was several months after others began to remark upon my deafness before I could realize my altered status with the world; and then not from what people told me, or even from my

inability to hear them, but from certain trifling but suggestive incidents. I sat reading one morning, when all at once I missed the companionable tick of the clock. My first thought was that it had stopped. I looked up; the position of the hands suggested no loss of time. I looked more closely; the pendulum was swinging as usual. I looked out upon the town-clock in a near steeple; the two marked the hour alike or nearly so. The truth came home almost as a blow that staggered me: it was I that *had stopped.* It was, however, in contact with outward nature that the scope of my loss was most vividly borne in upon me. One morning I was early out of doors. It was late in May, and the birds on the lawn and in tree and bush were holding carnival. For a little time I watched them, when all at once it occurred to me that I did not hear them. Could it be that they were not singing? A robin alighted on the lawn a little distance away. He lifted up his beak; I was quite sure I saw a familiar movement of his throat; but no note came to me. I

turned into my home reflecting, "I shall never hear the birds again as I have heard them." Another day I was standing beside a little river near my home. It flowed in its usual curves, it rippled over stones as was its wont; but to me it was a silent river: it glided past me but spoke not, nor ever after would speak to me. At another time I was standing in a pine grove in the season of the year

"When the pine tosses its cones."

The cones indeed were lying around me. I looked up; the breeze was swaying the branches, but

"The song of its waterfall tones"

was not borne down to me. At yet another time I drew up my curtain early one morning and was surprised to find it raining heavily. From childhood the sound of falling rain had been peculiarly pleasant to me; but now I discovered that the

"Drip-drop, drip-drop, over the eaves,
And drip-drop over the sycamore leaves,"

was no longer for me.

Thus through a few simple incidents was my changed estate made plain to me. There was still for me the thunder's crash, the tempest's roar, the cataract's plunge; but, aside from these and the like heavier noises, I must henceforth live in a soundless world. I remember reading about this time Krummacher's dialogue between Adam and Eloah, his attendant angel, and seeing in it a suggestion of myself though taken in reverse. It is the evening of the first day, and the young Adam notes with anxiety the deepening twilight. In some things he was not as well instructed as I; at any rate, as shown in the pleasant story, he did not know that a sensation the less does not mean a reality extinguished. So he asks of his angel if the young creation *will go*, swallowed up in Old Night. I had no suspicion that sound had gone, swallowed up in Old Silence; I had not a passing doubt but that to other ears the birds warbled, and the river laughed, and the raindrops pattered, and the pine-trees moaned; it was I that *had gone*.

I write thus of myself, well assured that I tell in substance the experience of the great multitude of my fellow sufferers. Now I would not magnify this experience unduly; there are sorrows everywhere in comparison with which it is entitled to no mention. Yet he is strangely wanting in sensibility who can take it home with cheerful spirit. He need not be rebellious, but he can hardly be less than pensive and regretful. To the ordinary sounds of nature he is dead. In his world leaves cannot rustle, or doves coo, or insects hum. Tree, air, bird, river, which before would converse with him in any solitude, now speak to no purpose. Before him the vast drama goes on, but it is only acted. A histrionic, but no voice is there.

The significance of this loss intensifies as we contemplate it more. The pleasure of sound in nature, because of its very constancy, is hardly to be appreciated until it is lost. We fail to note it because it is so normal. The usual commiseration of deafness goes no further than the disadvantage it occasions in the necessary communications

of life; just as of blindness, that it makes impossible the direction of one's hands in their tasks, of one's feet in their walk. These practical disadvantages are indeed serious and obtrusive, but in either case the measure of deprivation reaches far beyond them. Beyond the use of eyes in distinguishing objects is the simple joy of light; and we give no due estimate of the blind man's griefs till we take reckoning of this. It was of this that Milton was thinking when he wrote in *Samson Agonistes:*

"O first-created beam, and thou great Word,
'Let there be light, and light was over all,'
Why am I thus bereaved thy prime decree?
The Sun to me is dark
And silent as the Moon,
When she deserts the night,
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.
Since light so necessary is to life,
And almost life itself, if it be true
That light is in the soul,
She all in every part, why was the sight
To such a tender ball as the eye confined,
So obvious and so easy to be quenched,
And not, as feeling, through all parts diffused
That she might look at will through every pore?"

Similarly there is a joy in sound. We may often seek silence as distinguished from noise; but silence as distinguished from sound is another matter. Breaking from the din of business or the strife of tongues, how often do men find in the sounds of nature their rest and solace! For the sounds of nature, barring the harsher ones, are sweet sounds. Plato would reward victorious souls with the delights of spheral harmony; nature proffers to attentive ears a terrestrial equivalent of this. Nature's sounds, indeed, in our right adjustment to them, are very near to music. Our walk is appointed to us in a world of melody. There is proof of this in the effect which any dissonant sound may have upon us. The ear is offended by it, a fact that shows that such sound is unnatural to it, — a disturbance, that is, of the condition to which it is adapted, and which is all but constant. Even harsher sounds, cast upon the atmosphere, seem in a little time to have the harshness washed out of them. Emerson, whose observations of nature were

as accurate as his metaphysic was keen, noticed this, and wrote of it in lines which there can be no mistake in quoting:

"None can tell how sweet,
How virtuous, the morning air;
Every accent vibrates well;
Not alone the wood-bird's call,
Or shouting boys that chase their ball,
Pass the height of minstrel skill,
But the ploughman's thoughtless cry,
Lowing oxen, sheep that bleat,
And the joiner's hammer-beat,
Softened are above their will,
Take tones from groves they wandered through
Or flutes the passing angels blew.
All grating discords melt,
No dissonant note is dealt,
And though thy voice be shrill
Like rasping file on steel,
Such is the temper of the air,
Echo waits with art and care,
And will the faults of song repair."

And the deep truth conveyed here, he that hath ears may verify if he will. The roar of Niagara is certainly overpowering to one who observes the plunge from the bridge below or the cliff beside it; but at the distance of a mile or two—

"The artful Air will separate
Note by note all sounds that grate,
Smothering in her ample breast
All but godlike words,
Reporting to the happy ear
Only purified accords."

The crowing of a cock under your window may not be a pleasant sound, but it is not without melody as it comes from a distant farm-yard. The croak of frogs may grate harshly if very near, but at a little distance it is a lullaby to go to sleep upon. The cow has no fame even in poetry as a musician, yet her moo as borne to us from her pasture is musical. The thunder's peal may startle and terrify if it comes from just above you; but borne to you from the distant sky, it seems the rolling bass of "heaven's deep organ." Emerson tells in the poem we have quoted how the Indian is daunted by soft music which is "wrought from barking waves," and how in the scream of the panther in the wild the child may hear "convent-chanting." The farmer's wife very likely is no *prima donna*, and her

voice is sharp and shrill as she flings it across the fields in her noonday call to him; but its tone is not unworthy of Nilsson when it reaches him. The truth is that the very element by which sound is conveyed to us is charged with the further office of cleansing it of discord that it may come pure and pleasant to our ears. This, however, is of no purpose to the deaf man. With the sound he loses the music too; and so when he wakes to the consciousness of his loss it is with a sense of bereavement of which language can scarcely tell. He realizes that not only is a faculty destroyed, but that also an ever haunting joy has departed. There is within him a chord that responds to a harmony, but he has been banished to another realm where that harmony is not for him.

Only the half, however, has as yet been told. While the status with nature is thus changing, the status with men is undergoing a similar change. The finer chords of nature are lost, but the discords of the human voice are unhappily in evidence. Few speak

to the deaf man in pleasant tones. I well remember the impression that my wife was becoming very peremptory with me. Her requests seemed orders; her invitations were suggestive of commands. On her lips might be smiles, but there was severity between them. The people whom I met on the street seemed impatient with me. The grocer with whom I traded weighed and measured as usual, but a familiar geniality had gone out of his voice. The express-man did my errands, but he spoke roughly. The hostler was obliging in conduct, but his few and proper words came harshly to my ears. It seemed as if sympathy and kindliness had gone out of human tones, as for me, indeed, they had.

Of course this apparent harshness was due to a strained and unnatural use of the voice in the effort to make me hear. The old kindness was there, but the tones belied it. The tenderer emotions were as they had been, or perhaps enhanced by my evident misfortune; but the instrument that conveyed them was out of tune.

Such was my experience, the experience of so many others with difference of detail. And through this experience it was at length borne in upon me, that as the finer voices of nature so the tenderer and sweeter human tones were no more for me; that save in exceptional instances there were for me only the rasping discords which an unnatural utterance is sure to bring forth. Does any one think this no serious matter? It is permitted him to experiment for a time, to suppress the gentler qualities of tone, and observe the practical effect. Try this suppression in invitation to a child, and see whether he will come to you or run away from you. Try it with the sorrowing, and note how far you succeed in comforting them. Try it with one in the heat of passion, and see whether you call him back to reason or intensify his frenzy. Let the young man try it in his tale of love, and note in which direction it will move a maiden's hesitating will. Try it for a time in the household; let wife speak to husband or husband to wife in such quality of tone as

the deaf habitually hear, and note its effect upon domestic peace. Perhaps imagination, without the aid of experiment, may sufficiently realize the consequence. The truth is that in these human tones are the solace and the madness of the world; and to be shut out from the melody that gladdens and given wholly over to the discord that grates may be an endurable but it is certainly no easy fate. It has been a matter of wonder to me, considering the significance of human tones, how they may please or how they may irritate, that so little space is given them in our popular education. Surely in the ordinary way of life a pleasant voice is of more value than much arithmetic and all algebra, and many other things which we qualify our children to forget. If one has some capacity for song, the master's careful training may be sought; otherwise the cultivation of the voice, which I suppose should always be on the principles of music, is almost sure to be left to neglect. So *élite* young gentlemen speak in tones that remind us of the raven's croak; and young women

who surpass all birds in their plumage are suggestive of magpies when they talk. Fortunately the human voice is an instrument of such quality that only in its unnatural use (unhappily so common) can it be unpleasant; so the aim of musical training is to develop, not transform: to make its sweetness more prevailing, to increase its flexibility, to enlarge its range and add to its carrying power. I specify carrying power, for musical voices, as the deaf are sure to know, are ever the ones best heard. Now and then, at distant intervals, I meet one who for a little time beguiles me from the consciousness of my deprivation; and with rare exceptions they are always those whose tones have the clearness and strength and sweetness which song exacts and imparts. I have in mind such an one, a woman of musically trained voice, who will sometimes sit beside me, and though my trumpet is unpoised, with no seeming effort on her part, penetrate my dull ears with her melodious intonations. It is quiet conversation upon every-day themes, but her pure,

clear tones can be hardly less to me than Patti's song to her. They come to me, too, as a happy reminiscence of the time when the intonations of untrained voices were my unappreciated because daily joy.

There is another feature of the deaf man's case: under most forms of his affliction his head is full of noises. These are difficult to explain, but they are constant and irremediable. They are apt to be very varied, — the sing of mosquitoes, the hum of bees, the whistle of a locomotive, spiritual rappings, the wail of wind, the roll of water. They are aggravated by fatigue or illness, more endurable in better hours, but never still. Sometimes, after long listening, or a period of wakefulness, these many noises may come in unison, as if the imps were out, or rather in, upon a serenade. To most they are a distraction and a misery; — there are men in our insane asylums because of them. I say to most, for there are those who do not greatly mind them; and one I have known who, able to hear scarcely anything else, found a measure of comfort in

listening to them. Such a one should be able to say amen to Emerson, when he teaches that hell itself is not without its extreme satisfactions.

Thus I found myself, and thus for long years have continued, shut out from the harmonies of nature and the finer and dearer human harmonies, shut up with these distracting noises. I look back upon this experience without repining, but I cannot say that it has been easy. I — may my frequent use of this pronoun be pardoned. It is only for literary convenience that I thus use it, drawing from my own experience, fellow sufferer, that I may exhibit yours. It is a grievous affliction; but

> "It fortifies my heart to know
> That though I perish truth is so," —

an attitude of mind which we may widely extend and take home to our spiritual healing. The harmonies of nature are not for you, but they *still are*. They are a heaven which you are shut out from, but in whose rich joy the great multitude of your kind

partake. The air that beats upon you is charged with vibrations that carry to other ears a ceaseless melody. The brook still laughs, the wind quires, the insects hum, the birds are songful, the daughter's glee is musical, the husband's bass is tender, the wife puts smiles into her tones. — Only your tympanum is out of order.

IV

SOCIAL AFFLICTIONS

IV

Social Afflictions

THUS are the deaf shut out from the melodies of nature, and from the human voice in its finer and tenderer modulations. On the one hand is an oppressive silence, on the other a rasping discord; and between the two his life must go on.

But though thus cut off from nature and thus deprived of one of the chief charms of society, there is a difference in practical relation with them which places the burden of the far heavier grief upon the human side. If the deaf man cannot hear nature's voice, he, at least, can walk her paths in peace, and, with eye open to her wonders, a joy may thrill him as he goes. Clouds and sunsets, mountain peaks and the expanse of ocean, forest, valley, and winding river, ask only eyes and a receptive mind. In his human relations, however, he is still husband, father,

brother; he bears a hand in business, church, philanthropy, politics; in the accustomed highways and by-ways of life he meets his kind and communicates with them. There is often in him a desire, and in his conduct a tendency, to deal with his fellow-men as with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, observing what they do but giving no heed to what they say. A deaf man whom I once knew made himself a shrewd discerner of men's minds through close scrutiny of their actions while keeping himself out of the range of their voices. This, however, can only be in a measurable degree; and so, in his necessary efforts to communicate, the deaf man must incur manifold griefs of which something should be said.

And first, the manner in which he is often spoken to should be given a word. It is not difficult to tell in *what* manner to address a deaf man so as to bear in upon him the thing that is said with least discomfort to him. It is, however, a lesson which many find it very difficult to learn. There is an every-day occurrence which very hap-

pily illustrates. A man approaches a telephone with intent to speak with one who is five hundred miles away. He first draws the attention of the one with whom he will speak, and then with little more than average voice, but with instinctive care as to clearness of tone and distinctness of utterance, speeds his message. I often wish that people at the distance of five feet would treat me in like manner: first draw my attention, then with slightly elevated voice, but with clearness of tone and distinctness of articulation, address me. I might not catch the message at the first utterance; indeed I should often fail to. But it is simply certain that by no other treatment could I be dealt with more successfully. Yet people will lay hand on my shoulder, and shout into my ear or trumpet as if ambitious to be Stentor and practising at short range. Against such treatment, pleading for my fellow sufferers as for myself, I remonstrate; very rarely is it necessary, and for most obvious reasons it is unwise. First, such treatment is very likely to pro-

duce confusion, — in the least sensitive ear it is almost sure to produce a nervous shock, — and so to defeat the very end it is employed to realize. Secondly, it gives the deaf man thus addressed a painful sense of effort on the part of the one addressing him, for which no manifest kindliness of intention can quite make amends. He may have sufficient self-control not to show annoyance, but, closely questioned, he could rarely deny himself annoyed. Thirdly, the ear is a delicate organ, and the deaf man's is often in a peculiarly sensitive condition; and so the shout, especially when into a trumpet, is likely to produce a keen and searching pain. Fourthly, there is a rudeness in such treatment of which it is hardly possible not to be sensible; and so, while it is not sure to help the hearing, it is very apt to hurt the temper, and that badly. Give your deaf friend credit for a good measure of saintliness if he meets this treatment with entire serenity.

It may be suggested that one who is very deaf is not in a position to judge as to the

measure of effort that must be made in addressing him, that this can only be determined by others in their experiment upon him. This demurrer the thoughtful sufferer will not attempt to confute; but he can surely tell what treatment distracts and confuses him, what quality of tone will best reach him, and what rude handling adds weight to his burden. And here is an interesting fact which I have often observed, and which illustrates what is here maintained: while people not deaf will often struggle painfully to communicate with those who are, two deaf people, instinctively adopting the rules of speech given above, will quite as often get on very comfortably together. I recall a ludicrous incident from my own experience in which this is shown. Once at a social gathering I discovered a deaf woman who seemed to me neglected; so, taking her a little aside, I sat down for a chat with her. We were getting on very pleasantly together, when at length I became aware that we were attracting attention. I glanced around, and the host

bent over me and shouted into my trumpet, "We are *wondering* how you *two deaf people* can make each other *hear* without raising your VOICES!"

Other social discomforts to the deaf are met in habits of conversation to which they cannot possibly adapt themselves. Attentive listening to one who cannot easily hear is probably quite as fatiguing as heavy porterage to one who is lame. As fatigue increases, too, the head noises also increase and at length become intolerable. Yet he must deal with those who before all things want audience, who insist upon having it, and who fancy that they are entertaining while they are simply indulging in a prolixity that is merciless. While he is laboring to grasp the essential features of the story or argument, for this is all that he can do, it is leisurely spun out with "As I was saying," and "This reminds me," and "That recalls," and "You perhaps have heard," involutions which he cannot grasp and meanderings which are his despair. I am aware that there are others

besides the deaf who have a grievance here, but to them it is scarcely endurable. The hand or trumpet at the ear should always admonish to be brief and direct in statement; by frugality in speech should the labors of the deaf be economized. Yet the tortuous monologue goes on; and the deaf listener who was quite brave at the beginning is in hopeless confusion at the end. This experience is not only a very trying but also a very common one. And there is another habit of conversation, very proper with people who have ears to hear, but a source of misery to the deaf, — the habit of intrusion. I am conversing with a friend, we will say, of London; and he narrates a peculiar experience there. All is well so far; I have heard and been interested, and wish to carry the conversation further. Just as I am about to speak, however, a listener throws in an account of a like experience which he had in Damietta, and straightway these two are by the Nile while I am left alone by the Thames. This intruder I have been totally unable to hear;

in fact his speech has not been adapted to, or even intended for, my ears. He has taken my conversation from me, — a thing most impolite in itself, only no impoliteness is intended; and which the deaf, though too considerate to resent, will usually have the sensibility to feel. As a rule, the right of way in conversation is very properly forgotten; one of its chief charms is the freedom allowed to any one to come into it where he sees an opening. In dealing with the deaf, however, this right of way must be respected as a condition of their bearing any part at all. Thus to come into their talk is to drive them out of it. This species of eviction he may look upon as one of the inevitable consequences of his infirmity; yet it may be well enough to say that to be put summarily to silence cannot be pleasant. Unpleasant treatment may be smiled upon in view of innocence of intention; but, like a mistaken medicine given by a blundering physician, it produces its natural effect all the same.

Another source of anxiety with the deaf in society is the liability of being laughed at. They are almost sure to make blunders, which to any but the most invincibly sympathetic are likely to seem ridiculous; and if politeness restrains the loud guffaw, the suppressed titter, which is far worse, is almost sure. Many deaf people make great effort to bear themselves well in society — try, that is, to indemnify for their infirmity with special alertness. In order, too, not to make their infirmity prominent, they resort to such stratagems as their wit may suggest, and it would surprise the unknowing could they be shown how many and ingenious they may be. Despite their best efforts, however, their discomfiture will come, and when guffaw or titter greets it there is added to the pang of ridicule the humiliating sense of failure. By way of illustration I will narrate an incident in my own experience. I was called to preach of a Sunday in a neighboring town. I conducted two services, and was taken home to dine with a member of the congrega-

tion. Of course I was very weary, and, during the hour before dinner was served, my imperative need was rest. My host, however, did not understand this, and so from a mistaken politeness sat down for conversation with me. He was a man who had read and thought, and so, as to the substance of what he had to say, was interesting. His guttural tones, however, were ill suited to deaf ears, while his faulty utterance was muffled by a moustache, — a vanity which I have come to reproach in everybody else, though an adornment to which I hold fast myself. I rallied to the emergency, stole the lead in conversation where I could, made long explanations and told long stories, — specimens of the stratagems just referred to and illustration of the habit of talk that has been mildly reprobated. Thus I held my own without disaster till the dinner was called. Here, however, other trials were awaiting me. There were two or three guests from the village, and they must have their word with me; and there was the hostess whose turn had come.

She was one of those fair creatures, met so often in New England homes, who can read Emerson and cook a dinner, and serve either with the sweeter grace because she at the same time serves the other. Her voice, however, had apparently been formed by crooning lullabies, soft and gentle but with scarce any of the penetrating power to dull ears so essential. She baffled all my endeavors to get the lead in conversation; she had a fund of stories which she leisurely told, and took delight in long and detailed explanations. I rallied my waning powers, gave closest attention, guessed at what I did not hear, and smiled when others smiled; and thus got on quite safely for a time. At length, however, my disaster came. In an effort to take something from her lips I hopelessly blundered, and a noisy laugh all round the board was the consequence. Now I am so made that being laughed at for blunders that my infirmity makes inevitable is no serious affliction. When others laugh I can usually laugh too; and I have sometimes a knack of

making reprisals, in which I take an unregenerate delight. But probably the great majority of the deaf in my place would have been simply miserable. Multitudes can bear the consciousness of guilt quite as easily as the consciousness that they have been ridiculous; and a sense of defeat is agreeable to nobody. I do not justify this sensitiveness and I plead with my fellow sufferers to rise above it. I can, however, understand it; and I know from the confessions of not a few that, in consequence of such treatment, social relations, save on the most restricted scale, are very often found almost intolerable. They may take rebuff too seriously, but there is certainly rebuff that they have to take. And while I would urge my fellow sufferers so far as possible to throw off this sensitiveness, I would also labor with society. Though this treatment did not cost me even a passing pang, I suspect that it could hardly be justified by any standard of polite behavior. Is not polite behavior always that which wins and en-

courages and comforts? If from weakness of limb I had tripped and fallen, they would have hastened to help me up, with sympathetic and anxious inquiries as to my hurt; but as it was my ears that failed, they laughed at me. The ordinary solicitude as to a fall may be exaggerated, but it is beautiful; to meet the tripping of the deaf with a decorous sympathy were no less so; and, in the majority of cases, it is as earnestly called for. In the one case you comfort a hurt, in the other you spare a pang. Bruises may be hard to bear, but who will say that mortifications are less so?

The grief, however, that more than any other afflicts the deaf springs from the neglect and impatience which they experience from those about them. Of this treatment I make no personal complaint; nay more, I see reason for it and can extenuate it; but it is real. First, neglect. Unless my observation is badly at fault, very excellent people are likely to reduce social intimacies to low terms, if not the lowest, in dealing with a deaf neighbor; indeed, while I mark

very pleasant exceptions to the rule, this is very clearly the rule. Such intimacies, too, as are proffered or encouraged are likely to seem perfunctory rather than glad. As the deaf man walks abroad he meets those whom he respects, and by whom he may believe himself respected; but there is something in the formal courtesy that forbids him to seek more. Others walk together and are manifestly willing to leave him to walk alone. Even in the inner circle of those nearest them, those deaf are peculiarly fortunate who are not made to feel that their infirmity is a barrier to intercourse which even affection hesitates to force. Again let me urge that I am stating facts, not punishing slights.

Now the deaf I suppose to be on the whole as reasonable as other people; and so, explaining this social experience wholly from themselves, they may blame no one. Reasonableness, however, though beautiful, does not make hard conditions easy; at best it only saves from absurdity in our judgments respecting them. A young lady who has no suitors may in sweet reasonable-

ness confess within herself that it is because she is ugly that she has none. This reasonableness, however, does not comfort her; on the contrary, as she takes the explanation home, there is added a sense of personal ignominy to the pang of unrealized desire. The deaf man wants the ordinary social cheer, the free and hearty greeting of neighbor and neighbor, — because in his case so much harder to win and hold, he not unlikely may prize it more; and the calm acceptance of the fact that his infirmity makes it impossible only makes more painful the sense of the limitation it imposes. On the whole it would be perhaps in one sense easier for him could he charge his isolation to the cruelty of others rather than to his own incapacity; just as men solace their thriftlessness by complaining of politics and comfort their littleness by abusing providence. No rational acceptance of it, not even resignation under it, can make this deprivation less than a sorrow. One may in pride ignore it or in humility submit to it; all the same it is a frost in his

atmosphere that neither pride nor piety can melt out of it. The deaf are sometimes chided for withdrawing from society, as to the wisdom or unwisdom of doing which I shall have something to say on a later page. I will here remark, however, that society can have little attraction for one who feels himself under its ban; who, notwithstanding the formal kindness with which he is received, is yet not blinded to the fact that he is less desired than tolerated. I state the case somewhat strongly, — to some it may seem too strongly. My language, however, does not exaggerate extreme experience, and I must leave it to those less burdened to qualify it to their own.

But, secondly, impatience. Of this, too, the deaf have an unhappy tale to tell. Impatience towards one because of an infirmity! a blow for a pain, a punishment for a grief, a persecution for a cross! — Some gentle spirit warmly protests that of himself it cannot be, yet to whom, a Nathan unto David, I may say, "Thou art the man." And further, while I affirm it from first-

hand evidence, I am much more than willing to soften resentment towards it. It may have a cruel sound, it may often be cruel in experience; yet not cruel in intent. Sometimes it may express an impulse to be brief and peremptory with one to converse with whom is not easy, — a treatment which, if we cannot approve, we can at least condone; and very often it tells of nothing more than a nervous irritation which an obstacle may provoke. It may be often much the same feeling as that which we have towards a door that will not open readily, and which we are apt to press a second time with an impulsive vigor. If our doors could blab, what testimony they might bear against us!

In no aspect, however, in which philosophy or charity can show it can such treatment be other than unpleasant in experience. A blow in the face may sometimes be extenuated, but an immediate shock or smart is all the same its immediate consequence; and a deaf man turning away from such an encounter may carry thence an unresentful but rarely untroubled heart. He may say

the occasion of the rebuff was in himself; but thus he only considerately accounts for, he does not meliorate, his hurt.

There is an interesting comparison that brings the significance of this treatment into stronger relief. It is frequently observed that while blindness begets sympathy, deafness begets irritation. There are not a few of gentle mould who are eager to deny this, who from their sense of what is fitting are eager to maintain a tenderness towards both, distinguished only as the more lavish towards the victim of the greater misfortune. The facts, however, I suspect to be against them. Go broadly into society and watch with careful eyes, and it is all but certain that your observation will teach you that, while the blind are taken voluntarily by the hand and led whither they would go, the deaf are replied to with few and hasty words, and in tones that betray a petulance. This is often superficial, indeed, a surface irritation of gentle natures, yet none the less very hard to bear. Of course, I only affirm a tendency, not denying that there are many

exceptions, — blind men who are treated with rudeness and neglect, deaf men who are met with all cordiality and grace. Bring a representative of either class into a social gathering. The deaf man will be given formal politeness, and not a few will show him kindness; but this treatment, however it may please, will rarely charm away the consciousness of a prevailing neglect. The blind man, on the other hand, will be met with a forward sympathy: in dealing with him he will be shown the gentlest courtesy, in speaking with him all voices will be given the tenderest modulation. Of course, the explanation of this difference is, on the one side, the irksomeness of communication where communication is difficult; on the other, the appeal which helplessness without unhappy accessories ever makes to gentle natures. So it happens that the blind almost always love society, while the deaf so often find their best companionship when alone. To the former is denied the fine array, yet a beauty is borne in upon him by which he is warmed and comforted. The

latter sees the fine array, but somewhat as he looks on boreal splendors through icy air. And this contrast in part explains another which is often noticed: while blindness in the helplessness it imposes is a far greater affliction than deafness, the blind as a prevailing rule are the happier of the two. — I say, in part explains; on a future page I shall give yet other explanation. The one hears displeasure in so many tones, the other draws comfort from all voices. And be it observed that it is conduct, not intent, that is here complained of. They are often far apart, and in dealing with the deaf they are peculiarly apt to be so.

Such are some of the social griefs of the deaf, — one pressing more heavily here, another there, but all tending to bereave them of the social joy. Is there any remedy for these griefs? Probably none from the application of which an immediate cure can be realized; though the very statement seems to make plain the reverse conduct which should at least in some degree do away with them. Save in extreme cases,

the shouting that is complained of could be abstained from. Robbing the deaf man of his conversation can rarely be absolutely necessary; to refrain from laughing at his blunders would imply only a triumph of politeness; the neglect from which he suffers, Christian tenderness might very appreciably lessen; impatience with him, a warmer sympathy might very perceptibly meliorate. I once had occasion to speak with a stranger. Failing to catch his reply to me, I signified my failure as a deaf man must do. He repeated his reply, but there was that in his tone which made plain an irritation in his spirit. Conversation drifted on, and presently he asked the cause of my deafness. "I brought it from the Civil War," I explained. "Ah!" said he, "I too was in the Civil War. We are comrades." From his tone the irritation had now vanished; the sense of comradeship had brought sympathy in its stead. Here, I suspect, is illustration of what will ever be when a vivid sense of the reality of our human relationships bears sway within us. I

suspect, however, that the years will be many ere the happy era of such consideration.

Meanwhile it is possible that we who suffer may find at least a partial remedy at home, in the cultivation of a spirit of endurance and sweet reasonableness. First of all, let us accept the fact that society in dealing with us will not be as wise and gentle as it might; and, to brace our charity, it may be well for us to turn in scrutiny upon ourselves, and see how difficult it is to hold action to the level of intent. Ideal conduct, the Golden Rule applied, we may look for in the kingdom of God, but hardly here and now. For many millenniums yet our human kind will go blundering along, with good intentions in the main, yet from thoughtlessness or indifference or oppugnance inflicting unnecessary pain. But, you insist, those dealing with us might do better, — might be more considerate, more gentle, more forbearing. Yes, *might;* and so might you be less touchy, more reasonable, more brave. To all there is a *might*

be, which even at the poorer ranges of capacity more watchfulness should realize. There obtrudes here, however, another consideration. Let us reverse the direction of our glance, — take account, that is, not of society in relation with ourselves, but of ourselves in relation with society, of which we have a representative in a well-meaning but somewhat undisciplined neighbor. Grant that with more careful watch over himself he might spare us many discomforts; the query arises, would we have him? Allow that such care would be beautiful in him; would the exaction of it be beautiful in us? Would it not imply an unmanliness on our part which it would be ignominy to confess? It seems to me it would add to deafness another and an incalculable pang to think of those about me as constant in care how to approach me, — as, in their cursory dealing with me, on the alert not to wound me. I would rather have them take it for granted that, though the way of suffering is appointed me, there is yet some toughness in my fibre; that I

can take the natural discomforts of my infirmity with a reasonable degree of equanimity. Corns are tender, and mine are as sensitive as another's, and if trodden on I wince, as I can but do; yet I would not have my neighbors keep off the sidewalk for that reason. It may be well to make known the happier ways of dealing with us, for some will readily and gladly adopt them. Many, however, are slow to learn or apt at blundering; and, though with the kindest of intentions, will make us miserable if we will let them. Our truer course, our only worthy one, is to cultivate the moral vigor that in the encounter with these discomforts shall prove too much for them. Let us try to allow others a natural freedom, grateful for whatever consideration they may show us, and patient, though we wince, under the hurts they unintentionally inflict upon us. The condition of suffering is fastened upon us; it is for us to take care that our poise and dignity do not desert us. Our deprivation is great, but the immediate jewel of our souls is still worth preserving.

A cross is laid upon us; let us acquit ourselves as men, and bear it.

Secondly, while not comforted by finding companions in our misery, it may be well to observe that our case is not exceptional. Social disabilities are many, — ugly features, awkward manners, hesitating speech, want of tact, these involve social embarrassments different from ours, but quite as real and often as serious. Even faculties at best, together with fine manner and noble wisdom, if unattended by what we vaguely call magnetism, are not sure of special warmth of social favor. In fact, in exactness of speech, I suppose it is not infirmity that society punishes, but inability that it recognizes, — inability to meet it, to interest it, to charm it. You, fellow sufferer, seem often to feel that your infirmity should imply no difference in your social treatment, an exaction which the stammering and graceless and tactless could make with no more unreason. These social discriminations, while they can be made cruel, are yet natural and scarcely avoidable. They are made against

us, but you and I also make them. There are men who cannot speak plainly: their voices are managed badly, their articulation is indistinct. These, with no cruelty in my heart, I salute and pass on. I thus treat their infirmity as others mine. This consideration, if practically taken home, would make large deduction from the sum total of neglect, which the deaf are ever likely to imagine.

Thirdly, however keen may be our social desires, there are social restraints which it is the part of wisdom for us to impose upon ourselves. One of my own rules, which I will dare to commend, is to make myself as little obtrusive as possible. Conversation may be very animated around me, but I hold myself aloof from it. If any wish me to talk, my tongue is at their service, if to hear, I will poise my trumpet; but I wait till the signal is given me. Thus, by holding curiosity under constraint, I save myself embarrassment and others annoyance. Then, in dealing with those who have given clear indication that because of my infirmity

they do not desire me, I try to be not only reserved but charitable. I blame them not, though I shun their paths. For their temper towards me they have ample reason, which I frankly acknowledge. At the same time I must confess to another and a very different feeling towards men and women, just a few, who meet me in the old way, bestow their smile and betray no annoyance. The former, in the presence of a great obstruction, turn away from me; the latter comfort me with a royal courtesy. Those I cannot forgive, for I recognize nothing in their conduct that needs forgiveness; but to these my heart overflows with a gratitude that brightens all my way. A grateful recognition of special favor may lighten the heavy burden of more general griefs. Try it, fellow sufferers, and see if your happier experience does not ratify my word.

V

BUSINESS EMBARRASSMENTS

V

Business Embarrassments

OF course an infirmity from which one suffers socially must be a business disability, since so much of business is social in its requirement. I use the word "business" in a large sense, embracing in it all the many avocations by which a livelihood is won. A lawyer is a business man when he puts his knowledge or acumen in exchange for the money of his client; and the minister, the physician, the teacher, the employee on a railway or in a manufactory, in the like sense.

I have more especially in mind, however, that touch with human life through which a calling is fulfilled and an honorable maintenance won. It is in being wrenched away from this that the deaf man is likely to be made most keenly sensible of his misfortune. "He is no whole man," says Emer-

son, who does not know "how to earn a blameless livelihood. Society is barbarous until every industrious man can get his living without dishonest customs." I fear it must be admitted that he who is deaf is "no whole man;" yet the practical acceptance of this fact, implied in the surrender of his place in the enterprise and toil of life, is a burden on his spirits that is heavy indeed. He wants to toil, has ambition to achieve, has a service to render, a mission to fulfil; yet that touch of infirmity is a signal that he must give up all. He may be a reasonable man, but no reasonableness can make easy the acceptance of this doom; and, capacity for service still left him, he is likely to see a barbarism in the social temper that compels it. If one be from predilection a drone, willing to let his powers decay and eat a bread he does not earn, why, no matter for him. To a manly spirit, however, there is a demand for achievement; and he cannot be disabled for it without grief, or driven from it without resentment. Aside from the matter of livelihood, the transfer from

the rank of workers to the rank of idlers, which is so often the fortune of the deaf, implies a wrench which may be accepted with sad resignation from Providence, but only with bitter resentment from our fellows.

The matter of livelihood, however, may be and often is a sadly obtrusive one. Food, shelter, warmth, care in illness, the education of children, are not spontaneous products of nature or to be had for the asking. If one have fortune, though he must still carry within him the unhappy consciousness of thwarted ambition, he may live without anxiety. But if daily bread depend on daily toil, the outlook is likely to be dubious enough. The woman who must support herself, the man who has children to rear and educate and who would not lay heavy burdens upon his wife, should be accounted of heroic mould if courage does not falter on the hard way that must be trodden. To the former, the school is closed; the office does not want her, the nursery will not receive her, even the kitchen will repudiate her. The latter, if he have a farm, can still

cultivate it; if he own a fishing-smack, he can fish; if he live in a mining region, he can stake a claim and dig; if he have tools and a bench and aptitude for cobbling, he may be permitted to cobble; he may be suffered to saw wood, to shovel snow, to mind a dray, and engage in some other forms of ill-paid drudgery. But from the professions, trade, the manufactory, the school, public office, he is sternly barred away. His brain may be clear, his body strong, his hands deft; he may have fine education, high endowments, trained skill, winning manners, reproachless honor. But unless he have power as a writer, there is scarcely a field in which these high resources may have unchallenged exercise. Of many things we may conceive him yet capable; yet is he almost sure to be judged, not by his capacity, but by his infirmity. He may seem fairly entitled to Christian sympathy; yet is he punished for his cross. He would seem to be one in the presence of whose misfortune competition might hold back, allowing him to toil on unmolested in the

field where his labor is still successful; yet even here will his infirmity be turned against him in the effort to supplant him.

This, I am well aware, is not a pleasant picture; and some may think its colors too deeply laid. In these many years, however, I have taken the testimony of not a few of my fellow sufferers; and in the tenor of their prevailing confession, despite their bravest efforts to be considerate, there has been manifest a deep sense of wrong which such language as mine does not exaggerate. Further, though it is no purpose of mine to give utterance here to personal griefs, and I could not willingly do so without placing against them a long array of personal favors, I yet may say that my experience qualifies me to put myself in the place of my fellow sufferers, and to take the measure of what they endure. Is it said that they are too deeply involved in this experience to pronounce upon it fairly; that the personal equation must vitiate their judgment? Very likely this may be; of the personal equation all who would be just must take frequent

reckoning. Yet the question may be fairly pressed, Who can better judge of any conduct than he who knows it best? and these business rebuffs come home to the deaf with a clearness and vividness of which the casual observer, or even he who inflicts them, can know nothing. To the latter, they are but incidents in life, possibly unpleasant to experience, but of no great moment; to the former, they have the significance of baffled aim, of extinguished hope, of personal or domestic want. Again, you may say that because this experience is so vital to the deaf they find in it an exaggerated grievance. This, indeed, may be; yet still I cling to the conviction that could some unbiassed Daniel be brought to the judgment, with the facts all clear before him, he would pronounce according to the tenor of my words.

I have a deaf acquaintance whom I have never seen, — an epistolary acquaintance, that is, — who compares himself with a criminal just discharged from prison, and queries which has the better outlook in the fields where livelihoods must be won. I like not

the comparison. He is apparently a man of education and not incapable of nobler feelings; and this comparison, in the spirit in which he makes it, is unworthy of him. He seems to feel that the innocence of his life is regarded with no more favor than the ex-convict's sin, a judgment which he outrages human nature in holding. Yet, in the general struggle for a livelihood it is simply true that the deaf man and the ex-convict are about equally handicapped. The one has (presumably) good capacities but a bad reputation; the other good capacities but bad hearing; and it were difficult to say which is likely to meet the more persistent and discouraging rebuff. Depravity and infirmity, in the practical dealing with the world, are here brought to very nearly the like treatment.

In the presence of this embarrassment, especially on the part of those who have others depending on them, my word is necessarily a sober one. I can treat lightly of social embarrassments; I can commend the cheerful view of them, I can even laugh

at them, and often do so. But in the presence of one who, capable of doing so, is yet denied the sacred privilege of providing a dignified maintenance for those who are dependent on him, I cannot laugh. The gravity of his situation draws from me rather the sympathy that is due to sorrow or an appeal to the fortitude that can bear a cross. And if he complains that society treats him hardly, however willing I may be to extenuate society, I cannot deny his fact. For while the source of his grief is in part in himself, it is also in part, and that no meagre part, in the social dislike of which his affliction is the occasion. There are many services for which deafness radically disqualifies; but there are others for which this particular deaf man is disqualified only because he cannot be endured. That is to say, the disqualification is rather moral in others than physical in him. He has need of a little patience, but

> "Alas! for the rarity
> Of Christian charity
> Under the sun."

You are effusive in pity for his infirmity, and afflict him with a far weightier burden. Mere deafness he might bear with equanimity, but a needy family is a penetrating sorrow. His intellect is at its best, his physical vigor is equal to the calls upon it, to the world he wears a cheerful front, and not unlikely the consciousness of his infirmity may stimulate him to a more strenuous fidelity. But there all the same is the infirmity, which certainly does not add to his attractiveness, and a considerate and gentle dealing with which is witness to a grace of spirit, alas! so rare. So the range of remunerative employment which deafness has necessarily narrowed, is still further narrowed by intolerance of deafness, until the sufferer, unless favored by exceptional fortune, is practically driven from the field. There is said to be a great demand for farm-labor; but that deafness would be a serious obstacle to an applicant for this I am not without evidence. The deaf laborer might plough as straight a furrow, plant and cultivate and harvest as well as if possessed of the best

possible hearing; but there is the necessary effort to make him hear to which even farmer patience could not too confidently be judged equal. The qualifications for a coachman would seem to be wise care of horses, skilful driving, and ever courteous behavior; but these with deafness for accessory would ordinarily need to look long for employment. The porter is temperate and good-natured, and he carries trunks valiantly; but the chances are that he would lose his job if overtaken by deafness. The baker seems to have no great use for ears in kneading bread; but, unless a master whom others served, I fear he would be an unprosperous baker if his ears were to fail him. The printer at his case seems to bring into exercise hardly more than a quick eye and trained fingers; but, if a journeyman, I suspect he would have to journey speedily if deafness were to come upon him, and far before another position was offered him. Of course very pleasant exceptions can be quoted, but thus surely stands the rule in what it is our wont to regard as

the lower ranges of employment, while in the higher we should doubtless find it enforced with increased severity. Here is a man active in church and benevolent in society; he gives to missions, helps to build an asylum, contributes to the library; in a generous meaning of the word, he visits the fatherless and the widow in their affliction and keeps himself unspotted from the world. Yet it is to be feared that even he, in whom the Christian graces are so abounding, would dismiss from his counting-room the book-keeper overtaken by this misfortune. Indeed, this picture is drawn very nearly to the life of one whom I have known. The book-keeper might be as faithful and efficient as ever, yet in need of that tolerance for which deafness must always plead. Many a woman who goes the rounds of charity in some city, is familiar with hospital wards and the garrets and cellars of the slums, would shun the counter behind which a deaf salesman is standing. He would serve her with every possible care; but because of this impediment to

communication she will not approach him. A little while ago she was tender towards squalid vice; she now turns her back upon cleanly and well-mannered infirmity. He is struggling to maintain a foothold in the industrial world, well knowing that if he loses it, it will be scarce possible for him to gain another; she pursues a course that is simply sure to shake him from it. On the one side she is asked the special effort which his thickened eardrums make necessary, — a second statement of her want with special care as to her utterance, which at the distant intervals of her infrequent visits would imply no serious burden; on the other, a wife's dignity and children's education are put in jeopardy by her refusal. These illustrations will do for wide tracts of experience; and certainly the minister or the moralist may here remark on the expense to others by which many spare themselves; and may very seriously ask if such conduct is in accord with the standard of virtue they profess. I know that instances to a contrary tenor can be quoted, and I am glad to

recognize them. I have certainly known a porter who was deaf; very likely there are farmers who may consistently exact a qualification of my statement; the deaf coachman or printer may be found; the deaf salesman is not an impossibility. In a Massachusetts university there toils a professor whose hearing is very imperfect, yet through lengthening years kept at his post, revered, beloved, and successful. In a Massachusetts village there toils a minister, and for more than a quarter of a century has toiled, though his deafness is so extreme that speech with him is scarcely possible, who once told me that in all these years no unpleasant reminder of his infirmity, either by act or word, had ever come to him from his people.[1] Others in our clerical rank — a noble minister in Rochester, N. Y., a noble minister in Minneapolis, both sorely afflicted with deafness — come before me as I write.

[1] I cannot think I need hesitate to say that my reference here is to Rev. Joshua Young, of Groton. With this testimony before them, all deaf people should pray for the prosperity of his church.

In a professor's chair at Oxford sits one who could hardly be deafer and hear at all, permitted to render his priceless service through the Christian consideration that is shown him. One of his pupils once said to me, "It is very important that we hear him; it is not so important that he hear us."[1] Supported, too, by the like consideration, Professor Mulford was enabled to do his noble work in Cambridge. Other examples most likely any reader may supply, — men like these whom I have mentioned, who through especially high service or special grace of character have won and held an interest and appreciation in spite of their infirmity; others, too, less endowed, but capable of being faithful. Such examples, however, are only striking and impressive as exceptions to the hard rule on which we have lingered.

On this point I must disclaim all bitter-

[1] My reference is to Charles B. Upton, certainly one of the best philosophical minds in England. Some may think it doubtful if an institution is entitled to much praise for the prudence that abstains from chopping its own head off.

ness of feeling, though I cannot deny that my feeling is intense; and when I meet bitterness in others, though I cannot approve, I do not wonder. But what can be done about it? This question, fellow sufferers, I address to you. The grievance is real; is there a remedy?

Immediate and royal remedy, I suspect there is none. Were our case one of blighted cornfields, or if, manufacturing shoes, we could not sell them at a profit, why, we might appeal to Congress for relief, and failing there, form a new political party. It is clearly beyond the power of legislation to help us, though, considering the promises made by party leaders in political campaigns, I do not know but I should be insistent in my warnings not to be misled by them were our vote of appreciable importance. No more can we carry our grievance to society with any hope of gaining relief at its hands. To a slight extent we can educate and meliorate society, but this is all. Scolding it is of no avail, discipline it we cannot. Our remedy, I

suspect, must be sought at home; our one and only resource is self-discipline, the cultivation of the more reasonable and heroic mind. The burden, indeed, is heavy; but only as we are feeble can it crush us. To us as to so many others is the admonition: Meet the pressure without with manlier resistance from within; add strength to your shoulders and thus lessen the dead weight of your cross. It is an old lesson which we are slow to apply, yet constrained to preach: oppose to the more cruel wrong the serener fortitude, and to the darker sorrow the more radiant hope. To feeble spirits even trifling ills may be overpowering; to a Prometheus a Caucasus is possible. It is a truth which we draw from multitudinous experience that to the fate that assails the body there is a possible counterpoise in the spirit, which with God's help we may gain through our own endeavors.

To the attainment of this end we shall devote some later pages; we will here record two or three practical considerations which will help us in that direction.

1. First of all, it cannot be otherwise than wholesome for us to take frank reckoning of our limitations. Let us frankly face the fact that the sphere of our usefulness is necessarily narrowed; that there are many services for which our infirmity disqualifies us. With respect to these we must admit, of course, that we are not wronged, only treated justly, in that we are barred away from them. You could not serve at a telephone possibly; you would not do at all as a reporter; the recruiting officer would wrong both you and the service were he to receive you. As a physician you would be wholly out of place at a bedside where the throbbings of the heart must be listened to, and lips can only faintly tell the tale of suffering which skilful practice must exact. As a lawyer who must examine witnesses you could not blame a litigant for not trusting his cause with you; and think of a deaf man as priest in a confessional when some fair wrongdoer is confessing her secret sins. The frank acknowledgment of limitation is not immediately comforting, but it is

most wholesome. Through it we are brought face to face with our real condition, and indulge no misguiding and enfeebling illusion respecting it. So we spare ourselves the foolishness of blaming others for that which we can only refer to Providence. Here we come to that attitude in which we may possibly see that it is only reasonable to look up. There is often, indeed, a disposition to chafe against Providence; that chafing, however, is to no purpose. Providence remains the same, unmeliorated and uninstructed; the only result is that we are bruised and enfeebled. A serene acceptance of the inevitable is not easy to achieve, we must cheerfully grant; but there is a moral grace in it that is worth the most earnest endeavor. It may be somewhat far from the Christian, but it at least implies the dignity of the stoic, heart.

2. It is well, too, for us to put ourselves in imagination in the place of others; yes, in so doing there are lessons that may come home to us which we can ill afford to lose. You would keep your place at the counter

but the merchant cannot possibly employ you if customers will not trade with you. The institution cannot retain you in its service if patronage falls off because of you. In many relations in which you otherwise might serve, you are yet unavailable because people are repelled from you. Here is condition from which there is no escape, and which, as we would be simply manly, we must recognize. There may be chance here to read a moral lesson to society, indeed we have already read it; but let us recognize the position of the individual man. You need employment, and it is hard to be denied it; but asking it where it can only be unprofitable is but a form of mendicancy. Your cross is heavy, but what would you? It is *your* cross, yours to bear, and for your manhood's sake do not seek to devolve it upon another's shoulders. Fortune has bruised us, but it is still for us to say if we will be men.

3. We come next to that intolerance of which we have spoken, which institution and merchant and many others must reckon

with, and which must often dictate their dealing with us. Here, as already maintained, we have undoubtedly a grievance, as in other relations has many another victim of this world's buffet. The treatment is hard, — never admit that it is right; at the same time take home the fact that it is hardly worth while for us to bruise ourselves by resenting it. Do what we will, we cannot change society greatly; and are only wise as we deal with its rebuffs and prejudices as with the world's pests and poisons and flinty soil and bad weather, not pleased yet not offended; and adapting ourselves to them as we may. If railing would avail, why, I would say, rail on. Cull from your dictionary the choicest vocabulary of denunciation and fling it forth. It, however, will not avail; or only to make you a more miserable and more disagreeable, but not a more cordially treated, man.

It is difficult to speak to the comfort of one so handicapped. The best I can say is, Reconcile your mind to the narrow sphere, the lowly task, and, in poise of spirit, live

above it. For most there is a corner somewhere, where they may have a few flowers and all the stars. Accept the corner and look up. The world may doom you to plain living, but only you can deny yourself high thinking. Deafness is of itself an irksome and a heavy load, and its entail of poverty and struggle is very hard to bear; but worse than either, worse than both, is the spirit broken and discouraged. And, after all, is it not a supreme proof of a manly heart to take up a heavy and a gnarly cross and carry it?

VI

THE PATHOS OF DEAFNESS

VI

The Pathos of Deafness

I THOUGHT to write in this chapter of the Humor and Pathos of Deafness. A little reflection, however, showed me that while deafness may be pathetic, it can hardly in the nature of things be humorous. Humor is warm and cheerful and comforting. It is a sunny friend, a cheerful visitant. It brings smiles at the expense of no one, but to the good cheer of all. Deafness, on the other hand, is a fountain of bitterness. It may impose disciplines that strengthen and call forth sympathies that ennoble, but it yields no cheer. The blunders of the deaf very often provoke laughter, in which they too may join; but here, as I conceive, we have illustration of the ludicrous, and the ludicrous and the humorous are very different. The humorous comes out of the richness of life; it is sweet perfume or pleasant

flavor. The ludicrous, save where it is a part that is played, bears nearer resemblance to the whiff of ammonia, or the swallowing of that which is rancid to our taste. Aristotle defines: "The ludicrous is produced by any defect that is unattended by pain or by fatal consequences." And he goes on to say that an "ugly and deformed countenance does not fail to cause laughter, if it is not occasioned by pain." The ludicrous may be often indeed of intention, and that we may laugh; as in the case of the circus clown, who retails from his far sought and long practised absurdities, though his spirits are jaded or morose; or it may be of the slips and blunders and misunderstandings to which the deaf are ever liable.

Any deaf man can supply illustrations from his experience; and the current tales of mishap on the part of the deaf are apposite enough. Mr. James Payn, writing in the "Forum" (vol. xii.), tells of a lady "more remarkable for her airs than her graces" who was described as treating every one with *hauteur*. "I am astonished at her

doing that," said a deaf man; and well he might have been, for he thought she had been described as treating every one to porter.

In the same article this writer tells of a company conversing of the Indian mutiny. One of the number, telling of a rebel who fell into the hands of the British, said, "He had me a short shift." "What did that matter," asked a deaf gentleman contemptuously, "in so warm a climate?"

I recall an instance which a lively woman used to narrate in California. She had been travelling by railway, and had left the train at a station a mile or two from a little village which was her destination. Looking round for some conveyance, she espied an old man seated in a rough country wagon, in which were already a couple of passengers. It was apparently not a public carriage, so she approached him and smilingly asked, "Will you carry me?" The old man gave a start, as if an electric current had struck him, and replied in a half-frightened way: "No, lady; I'm very sorry, lady; but indeed I can't.

I 've a wife and eight children now, lady." Penetrating his dull ears, her request was an invitation to marry her.

It is a fact that all do not know as well as they might that the chief difficulty in hearing is with the consonants. Vowel sounds carry themselves, and can rarely be mistaken by the dullest ears, but consonants must be articulated if they are to be heard; and the very prevalent habit of slurring them, while often the discomfort of those who can hear, is the despair of those who can't. Ordinarily I suppose that deaf people do a good deal of guessing as to what is said to them; and if their general faculties are alert they can often guess quite successfully. The consonants they do not hear they supply, and so get on. With one order of words, however, guessing is peculiarly unsafe, and that is proper names; especially when given in introductions, which for some unaccountable reason are almost always in a still small voice. Hence arises a habit with some deaf people, when not clearly hearing the name of one to whom they are introduced, of ask-

ing that it be spelled to them. I used to do so until I came upon the following incident, which showed me that the practice involved perils. A deaf man, not clearly hearing a name that was given him in an introduction, asked to have it spelled to him, which was promptly and loudly done, — "S-M-I-T-H."

I have a clerical acquaintance, a man of much ability but very deaf, who tells this story of himself. He was the principal speaker on some public occasion, and had spoken, we may well believe, a wise and inspiring word. As he sat down, the president of the meeting made a brief address, following which the whole audience arose. The minister, hearing nothing, but supposing that to stand up was the thing in order, arose with the rest. There was manifest amusement in the audience, which he could well appreciate when it was told him that the rising was a vote of thanks to himself.

I think I may dare to draw an incident out of my own experience. I have had my share of such mishaps, doubly and trebly

sufficient for my humiliation, if I would allow unavoidable accidents to humiliate me. One, however, stands out conspicuously from all the rest; and if a prize were offered for a deaf man's blunder, the best, or perhaps I should rather say, the worst, I think I might enter it with good hope that I should win. It was in the earlier years of my ministry, and my wife and I were invited to dine with one of my good deacons. In that New Hampshire region few laymen were in the habit of asking a blessing at table; but it was quite the custom to invite the minister to do so, and what is customary is looked for. At that time my deafness, though rapidly growing upon me, was in its earlier stages, and I was resolutely striving by special alertness to fight off its natural consequences. So, waiting for the invitation, which surely my reverent deacon would not withhold, I construed a seeming nod to be that, and bowed my head and reverently said grace. Raising my head, I caught the eyes of my wife from across the table, who was looking at me as only wives can look, her

face all colors except the right one. It was clearly apparent that something had gone wrong, though I could not divine what. The table was bountifully spread and cheerful, and the hour of conversation after it was very pleasant, even bordering upon hilarity (may no pious soul be troubled at thought of a minister and deacon hilarious); and I quite forgot that reproving glance, that face of many colors. Wives, however, though in many ways useful, can rarely be depended upon to forget; and, reaching home, my ignominy was shown me. The deacon, himself slightly deaf and of soft and muffled voice, was equal to saying grace, even in the presence of his minister, and *had done so*. That food, like Mercy, was twice blessed. We had blessed it in concert. It pleases me now to think that in the collision I did not knock him off the track; and if there was any contrariety in our petitions, I hope the Lord, who heard us both, discriminated in his favor. It was his food, and so it seems only right that it should have been blessed according to his mind, not mine.

Of such nature are the mishaps into which the deaf, if they attempt to be social, are continually falling, — blunders manifold of speech and conduct, against which no wisdom can make provision. And there is nothing of humor in them, — they do not come out of a smiling spirit, as humor ever must; and the smile they occasion is at the expense of one, not the joy of all. In their superficial aspect, however, they are ridiculous; and those who view them very naturally will laugh at them. And thus it is my own wont to do, even when I am the humiliated subject of them. If I know my own spirit, I would not devolve upon others even a meagre part of the burden of my infirmity; but if there is any fun I insist upon having my share of that. Sometimes I think I am entitled to the greater portion because I am the occasion of so much; and I inflict upon others the story of my mishaps in order that I may have my laugh. Laugh, brother in affliction, laugh. The best way to get on with a misery is to laugh at it if you can; indeed so potent a medicine is laughter that

it is well to seek occasions for it, and magnify them to the utmost. A misery cannot wholly crush us; to some extent we are masters of it when we can laugh at it. In advancing years, I indulge many a retrospect of those brave days when I was in the ranks of the Union Army during the Civil War. Of course we had hard experiences; — our sons who went to Santiago, we smile when they talk of war. But in every troop there was reasonably sure to be some one endowed with the happy faculty of seeing misery in a ludicrous aspect, and by some inspired comment making it the buffet of his comrades' laughter. Such should be doubly pensioned for their incalculable service. It was after a hard day's march and the bivouac was fireless and not impossibly supperless, and with the fatigue and hunger we were filled with misgivings and forebodings and homesick yearnings. With that laughter, however, came brightness and warmth and satiety. Joke was sure to follow joke, peal on peal laughter succeeded laughter, and so misery was held at bay. The rain might drizzle without, but

it could not extinguish an inward jollity. Our surroundings, as our mothers might have viewed them, were dismal enough; but somehow our laughter made them cheerful. It was a muddy couch with no shelter over us, but we laughed and slept and dreamed, and woke up to laugh and do and dare. In the story of Pandora's box I see a parable which it is impossible to disown, and my meditations upon which, even when most serene, are apt to be too pensive for my joy. Over against the legend, however, I have sometimes constructed another, which tells how, as the swarming ills flew forth, some god in pity for mankind created Laughter, and sent him to our world to aid in countervailing them. He is not equal to all our griefs, indeed; for some are in their nature sacred, and in the presence of these the sprite is reverently silent; and some, it must be confessed, are too heavy for his charm. But in our wrestle with all others, the great multitude with which we are brought to deal, he is at our call; and when his challenge rings forth they are discomfited.

In their deeper nature, however, such incidents are anything but laughable. We smile at their absurdity only because we forget the sorrow that is its explanation. The Queen of England is said to be growing deaf, and recently an inappropriate remark of hers on some state occasion was quoted with the comment, "How pathetic!" Doubtless the writer's sympathies were touched by consideration of her royal station, and the need she has of the unfettered exercise of a royal grace. His remark, however, applies as fittingly to all others, who from like cause err in like manner; — princesses and common folk are brought to a level under the touch of infirmity. These incidents, laughable as they seem, are manifestations of weakness: we may write them in the category of a fall because the limbs are weak, of wandering steps because the eyes are dim, of stammering speech because paralysis has touched the tongue, of intellectual aberrations because reason has lost the power of guidance. Viewed in their manifestation, they may be amusing; viewed in their cause, they are

too sad for smiles. And it is in this latter aspect that the deaf are wont to view them. They may take their situation tranquilly, and wear a cheerful front when such accidents befall them; still they know that they thus publish an incapacity which, always hard to bear, is far harder when thus made conspicuous. The ludicrous in their conduct is a sorrow to them chiefly because they are helpless to prevent it. The buffoon may be an interesting character, and we may applaud his effort for our entertainment; but few indeed can be of happy mind when of compulsion they have sustained his rôle. To personate Falstaff may be an actor's pride, but to be Falstaff in reality is another matter. For myself, though I am wont to smile at my misadventures, I feel in the contemplation of them like a necessitated Costard wholly unsuited to my part.

Thus the mishaps of the deaf, which often seem so laughable, are really illustrations of the pathos of his life. They reflect an ineptitude which in its deep significance is a suffering. The laughter they provoke is at

a variety of sorrow. I recall a scene from war experience. We were constructing fortifications under intense heat; when suddenly one of our number, dropping his spade, plunged a little to the rear and seemed to indulge in a fantastic dance attended by wild gesticulations. A shout of laughter greeted the performance, and a volley of jokes was fired at the performer. A moment later, however, our countenances were sober enough, when we discovered that our laughter had been at the contortions of a dying man.

There are, however, other and positive illustrations of this pathos on which we may linger for a moment. Most of the features of the deaf man's experience on which we have lingered might be summoned here. This altered relation with outward nature, this exchange of a world of melody for a world that is soundless or nearly so, is not to be conceived a matter of little moment. There are listless and phlegmatic temperaments that may not mind it, but to an ardent and imaginative spirit it brings a

sense of deprivation which is likely to deepen as the years lengthen. The sounds of dripping rain and flowing river, of swaying trees and humming insects, may seem not of superlative importance, but I do not like to go my way without them. My interest in birds has never tempted me to any serious study of them; but I would give much to hear their delirious jubilee once more; and such I am sure would be almost uniformly the deaf man's testimony. There is a world just beyond him which is his birthright and his appointed home from which he must hold aloof. The door is hospitably open, but he cannot enter. There comes from this experience a sense of repression; he is within the walls of a prison from which there is no deliverance. With respect to society, too, he carries the sense of an analogous deprivation, only here he seems shut out, banished from that fellowship with his kind which a normal human spirit ever asks. He wants to go in company, but must walk alone; he wants the social circle, but must sit apart. Shut in

from nature, shut out from society, a sense of isolation is sure to haunt him. He has yet other faculties, and he may find consolation in the use of them: the hills are still there, and the soaring sky, and the shining sea: the meadows are green, the birds on the wing, the flowers bloom, the breezes are laden with vigor and sweet odors: there are truths to learn, duties to perform, causes to serve; yet none the less this twofold sense of deprivation is an abiding fact, of which he can have at most only brief periods of unconsciousness. There is ever an alluring threshold which he may not pass, a relation for which he yearns, but from which he is hopelessly divorced.

There is another illustration of impressive significance. On another page I have compared the blind and the deaf, finding the former with their greater affliction the happier of the two, and this because of the gentler treatment which they receive. In dealing with them all voices are gentle, all acts are kind, and they deeply feel the smile they cannot see. But this is not all. The

difference in their degree of happiness is yet further explained by another contrast that comes now into view. While the blind from simple necessity must submit to their condition, do little of their own direction, and be led whither they will go, with the deaf it is not so. They cannot in this practical way accept their condition, and so they are constantly chafing against it. They must go forth, they must act, though with the experience of repulse at every turn. Their life is an incessant struggle with gravity, a beating against bars, a wrestle with fate, the result of which is discomfiture and bruises manifold. The former are spared as a child is spared, their helplessness winning for them the guiding hand and the shielding care to which their spirits soon learn accommodation. The latter are bruised as men must be bruised in struggling where they cannot win, in beating "where they may not pass." I wonder if the tale of Sisyphus may not be a poetic embellishment of a deaf man's experience.

These elements of a deaf man's misery

have more especially to do with his outward relations. There is another more especially within him, but which, like heart disease or an evil temper, bears a part in his outward relations at last. It is distraction. It is my wont to connect this very considerably with the head noises of which I have spoken. Rarely will any two be met who will make the like report of these, but probably most find them the source of a bewilderment which is the unhappy attendant of all their walk. This is not only a misery in itself; it is a source of difficulties and perplexities manifold. In the work of life it is a sad incumbrance; intellectual poise is disturbed by it. The serene confidence in himself, which every man must have who will achieve his best, it takes away. Here is my own weightier charge against these noises. A large part of my work has been studious, dealing, too, with the severer problems, and so has made demand for a close concentration of thought, which this bewilderment has made often impossible and always more difficult.

Intellectual meandering, errors of fact, faulty construction, are perils to which it constantly exposes me when I write. Achievement is thus made almost painfully slow by reason of the self-watchfulness which I feel compelled to exercise. But when I go out of my study it goes with me; at table, in society, on the street, it is a disliked companion that I cannot drive away from me. In many relations it has become a part of my personal equation, for which, as I would be sane in my judgments, I must make allowance; and as with me, so I suppose it must be with most.

These elements taken together impose a burden that is not slight. I would not exaggerate it, there are others that are far harder, and though heavy, it is one that a vigorous manhood might hope to bear with a fair degree of equanimity. Throw them, for instance, upon that man who passed my window an hour ago, in the full vigor of thirty years, toiling out of doors, eating heartily and sleeping soundly, and though at once sensible of their discomforts,

he might yet carry them with comparative serenity. He would have strength with which to meet them, just as he has strength for the plough he holds or the stone-wall he builds. Unhappily, however, they are not to be judged alone by their immediate discomforts; there are consequences which follow upon them which must be taken into the reckoning. That man has a physical organism presumably at its best, which the deaf man from the steady wear of these miseries cannot long possess. These head noises alone, — there are few nervous organisms so hardy that they will not wear out at last from their constant irritation. Of these noises insomnia is at last almost certain to be the attendant; with many, indeed, at first. Our psychology has not yet settled all questions as to the relation of nerves to mind; but this we know, that mind is at the interior end of them, and reflects their state. It is not strange, therefore, and the fact is witnessed to by wide experience, that from the prolonged wear of these miseries unhappy mental tenden-

cies are almost sure to appear. By some, indeed, they may be driven away, — never conquered, but held in abeyance, — but only through a continuous and arduous and ever harder fight; and alas! all are not fighters. I am trying to speak with moderation, yet I must dare to say that a serene and cheerful spirit that has survived a long experience of extreme deafness, especially if attended with head noises, would impress me as a delightful exception. One ruled by high principle and severely trained in the nobler standards of conduct, by constant watchfulness and earnest endeavor, may carry this infirmity into deepening years with a smiling front from which the world will infer a sunny heart. But overhear his soliloquies as he sits or walks alone, bring yourself into such relation with him that you can look within him, and you will be almost sure to discover that his smile is of his duty and not his joy. It is a brightness that he offers others in consideration for their happiness, not a spontaneous radiance from his heart. The

interior consequence of deafness, the result to which it almost inevitably tends, is despondency; and if the sufferer escapes irritableness, moroseness, and moral bitterness, he may well bless the kindly fortune that spares him the deeper grief which his infirmity is so likely to entail. In a way he may entertain cheerful views, he may be optimistic in his creed, and stoutly say, "All 's right with the world." Yet he maintains it in the sad consciousness that something is wrong with him. His sufferings are a medium through which the light is discolored as it enters into him. His nobler philosophies are held in spite of, rather than are comforted by, his experience. Notwithstanding his philosophy, the brightness of the world is dimmed, and he pensively muses when according to his faith he should rejoice. He may hold his own as a rational and revering nature, but with a sad and anxious consciousness of struggle as he does so. At best he feels himself but a resolute swimmer against a current by which but for his valiant and

unintermitted stroke he would inevitably be borne downward. I would not claim too much for those with whom I am so closely affiliated, and in the presence of whose victories over suffering I am reminded by painful contrast of my own humiliations. Yet I may own the feeling that those who bear this burden with serenity through many years achieve a moral victory that is not slight. I cannot participate in their triumph, their laurels I cannot share. My defeats, however, may in some measure qualify me to accord to them their praise. I have struggled in the current sufficiently at least to know how determined must be the will and how dauntless the faith and how tireless the effort that shall successfully breast it.

Illustrations of the effect of deafness upon the spirits are of easy access; any neighborhood can furnish them, and most readers will at once recall them. There is the experience of one, however, that has peculiarly interested me, and which is especially suited to this page because that of

one of rank so high and of fame so wide. It is that of Beethoven, and comes to us in his letters over which many an eye has moistened. From these I will quote a few passages. I find myself in a measure critical of his utterances, for I do not find in them the heroic tone. They were, however, the unpremeditated outpourings of his heart to those who were near to him, and with probably no thought of the public eye; and if they speak with an intensity of feeling which many would like to abate, they may remember that they are dealing with one whose nature was peculiarly sensitive, and to whom, as a musician, the blight was peculiarly damaging: and who saw in it the baffling of great powers which he knew were within him. Writing to Amenda, in the year 1800, he says:—

"Oh! how happy should I now be, had I my full sense of hearing; I would then hasten to you; whereas, as it is, I must withdraw from everything. My best years will thus pass away, without effecting what my talents and powers might have enabled me to perform. How melancholy

is the resignation in which I must take refuge! I had determined to rise superior to all this, but how is it possible? If in the course of six months my malady be pronounced incurable, then, Amenda! I shall appeal to you to leave all else and come to me, when I intend to travel . . . and you must be my companion. . . . You will not, I know, refuse my petition; you will help your friend to bear his burden and his calamity. . . . I beg you will keep the fact of my deafness a profound secret, and not confide it to any human being."

Not of the noblest temper this. We can easily quote from prophet and martyr both word and example by the side of which these utterances would look unheroic enough. Paul would not have written so, no, nor Epictetus. There are men around us serenely bearing a far heavier cross, and women still trusting and smiling on whose hearts has fallen a far darker blight. Plainly here is not the spirit that is poised on the assurance, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." Still there are few who have long suffered from deafness who may not see in these

words some reflection of themselves, at least in their occasional moods; and many who are not deaf may see the condition of no ordinary grief in the seeming eclipse of a great career.

In the same year he wrote another friend: —

"You wish to know how I am, and what remedies I use. Unwilling as I always feel to discuss this subject, still I feel less reluctant to do so with you than with any other person. For some months past Vering has ordered me to apply blisters on both arms, of a particular kind of bark, — a disagreeable remedy, independent of the pain, as it deprives me of the free use of my arms for a couple of days at a time, till the blisters have drawn sufficiently. The ringing and buzzing in my ears have certainly rather decreased, particularly in the left ear, in which the malady first commenced, but my hearing is not at all improved; in fact, I fear that it is become rather worse. . . . What is your opinion of Schmidt [an army surgeon]? I am unwilling to make a change, but it seems to me that Vering is too much of a practitioner to acquire new ideas by reading. On this point Schmidt appears to be a very different man, would probably be less negligent with regard to

my case. I hear wonders of galvanism; what do you say to it? A physician told me that he knew a deaf and dumb child whose hearing was restored by it [in Berlin], and likewise a man who had been deaf for seven years, and recovered his hearing. I am told that your friend Schmidt is at this moment making experiments on the subject."

Those were not the days of the modern specialist, whose keen science can detect so much, but alas! can cure so few. It was, however, as now, the day of the empiricist and quack, and Beethoven, like so many of us, was seizing upon the report of whatever nostrum held out a promise of relief, no matter how absurdly; following will-o'-the-wisps to the natural issue in vanity. Very likely, like ourselves, he may at times have caught a gleam of hope from these insidious assurances, and gone his way in the elation of prospective remedy. Yet even in this very letter, with the potencies of galvanism and the skill of Dr. Schmidt so vividly before him, he could write: —

"You could scarcely believe what a sad and dreary life mine has been for the last two years;

my defective hearing everywhere pursuing me like a spectre, making me fly from every one, and appear like a misanthrope."

In the same year, a few months earlier, he wrote: —

"My ears are buzzing and ringing perpetually, day and night. I can with truth say that my life is very wretched; for nearly two years past I have avoided all society, because I find it impossible to say to people, *I am deaf!* In any other profession this might be more tolerable, but in mine such a condition is truly frightful. Besides, what would my enemies say to this? — and they are not few in number."

By enemies, I suppose he means those who combated and disparaged him as a musical artist.

In the same letter he further writes: —

"In the theatre I am obliged to lean close up against the orchestra in order to understand the actors, and when a little way off I hear none of the high notes of instruments or singers. It is most astonishing that in conversation some people never seem to observe this; being subject to fits of absence, they attribute it to that cause. I often can scarcely hear a person speaking low; I can

distinguish the tones, but not the words, and yet I feel it intolerable if any one shouts to me. Heaven alone knows how it is to end! . . . How often have I cursed my existence! Plutarch led me to resignation. I shall strive if possible to set Fate at defiance, although there must be moments in my life when I cannot fail to be the most unhappy of God's creatures. I entreat you to say nothing of my affliction to any one. . . . I confide the secret to you alone. . . . Resignation! — what a miserable refuge! and yet it is my sole remaining one."

"Plutarch led me to resignation." It may occur to some that he might have done well had he pondered Plutarch a little more, and so have imbued his spirit somewhat more thoroughly with the heroic virtue which the stoic moralist inculcates. When he speaks of Resignation as a "miserable refuge," it is very evident that he has not attained it; for at that far summit

"Heaven's light forever shines, earth's shadows fly;"

and that he was enveloped in fog, depressing and impenetrable, we need no other witness than the spirit that breathes through these

utterances. However, Beethoven was no stoic, and in that he was none he comes nearer to the most of us. The reflections of a Marcus or a Socrates under the like affliction would doubtless have been of a far higher order; but thus, I fear, less faithful to the common sorrow. The latter in regal speech would have taught us how to bear; but the former gives voice to what we suffer.

Here is an extract from another letter, written two years later. It is somewhat retrospective in its view, and deals much with that sensitiveness which many think foolish, but which is certainly human. It also lets us into the deeper depths of his sorrow, and declares the high aim through which alone he felt himself able to endure it, —

"Born with a passionate and excitable temperament, keenly susceptible to the pleasures of society, I was yet obliged early in life to isolate myself, and to pass my existence in solitude. If at any time I resolved to surmount all this, oh! how cruelly was I again repelled by the experience, sadder than ever, of my defective hearing! — and yet I found it impossible to say to others, Speak

louder; shout! for I am deaf! Alas! how could I proclaim the deficiency of a sense which ought to have been more perfect with me than with other men, — a sense which I once possessed in the highest perfection, to an extent, indeed, that few of my profession ever enjoyed! Alas, I cannot do this! Forgive me therefore when you see me withdraw from you with whom I would so gladly mingle. My misfortune is doubly severe from causing me to be misunderstood. No longer can I enjoy recreation in social intercourse, refined conversation, or mutual outpourings of thought. Completely isolated, I only enter society when compelled to do so. I must live like an exile. In company I am assailed by the most painful apprehensions, from the dread of being exposed to the risk of my condition being observed. It was the same during the last six months I spent in the country. My intelligent physician recommended me to spare my hearing as much as possible, which was quite in accordance with my present disposition, though sometimes, tempted by my natural inclination for society, I allowed myself to be beguiled into it. But what humiliation when any one beside me heard a flute in the far distance, while I heard *nothing*, or when others heard a *shepherd singing*, and I still heard *nothing!* Such things brought me to the verge of desperation, and well nigh caused me to put an end to

my life. *Art! art* alone, deterred me. Ah! how could I possibly quit the world before bringing forth all that I felt it was my vocation to produce? And thus I spared this miserable life — so utterly miserable that any sudden change may reduce me at any moment from my best condition into the worst. It is decreed that I must choose *Patience* for my guide. This I have done. I hope the resolve will not fail me, steadfastly to persevere till it may please the inexorable Fates to cut the thread of my life. Perhaps I may get better, perhaps not. I am prepared for either. Constrained to become a philosopher in my twenty-eighth year! This is no slight trial, and more severe on an artist than on any one else. God looks into my heart, He searches it, and knows that love for man and feelings of benevolence have their abode there! Oh! ye who may one day read this, think that you have done me injustice, and let any one similarly afflicted be consoled, by finding one like himself, who, in defiance of all the obstacles of Nature, has done all in his power to be included in the ranks of estimable artists and men."

Eight years later he wrote to the same friend once more: —

"I should not only be happy, but the happiest of men if a demon had not taken up his settled

abode in my ears. Had I not somewhere read that man must not voluntarily put an end to his life while he can still perform even one good deed, I should long since have been no more, and by my own hand too! Ah! how fair is life; but for me it is forever poisoned!"

Evidently he still needed his Plutarch, if not a higher lesson and a diviner guide. Whatever else these utterances may bear in upon us, we surely find nothing of resignation in them. Resignation is a mountain-peak, whose sides are flinty, and up which we toil with weary limbs and bleeding feet, but at whose top our souls dilate as they take in the glory. Plainly he never reached this summit, nor even in upward climb attained beyond the thorny bramble at its base. His was ever a bruised spirit, never a resigned one. These are plaints of one baffled and repressed, beating against conditions that only wound him more the more strenuously he throws himself against them, — as with so many others whom the like sorrow has overtaken.

Of course all bear in mind that these are

the utterances of no ordinary man; of one highly and delicately organized, of sensitive temperament, of burning enthusiasm, devoted, too, to an art in the prosecution of which hearing would seem to have been only less indispensable than speech to Cicero or sight to Raphael. For him we can well admit that the cross was peculiarly hard to bear. Yet was he clay and spirit as are we; and hindered progress and balked ideals, and immitigable suffering in their essential features are the same to all. If terrible in the experience of a Beethoven, they cast a shadow only a little less dark upon natures of lower range; and multitudes there are who lament less loudly, who hear in these passionate utterances the outbursts of a grief which is their not unfrequent visitant. In shadow and in light, the great are the more representative, not the exceptional.

VII

HELPS AND CONSOLATIONS OF DEAFNESS

VII

Helps and Consolations of Deafness

THE last chapter presented a melancholy picture, but it is doubtful if its colors were too deeply laid. Deafness is a grave infirmity; no truthful account of it can make it less than that. And we must bear it; that, fellow sufferers, is a doom from which for most of us there is no escape. There are forms of deafness, indeed, that are remediable; and such as are afflicted with them it will be presumed will seek the remedy. If not, I have no sympathy that I can spare them. These words are for the large class whose case is irremediable, and with whom the practical question is as to the manner of their bearing. It surely does not befit us to bear ill what we can possibly bear well: we have a manhood at stake here which we are bound by whatever means to defend. This brings us at once to the con-

sideration of helps that we may reach out to. There is always, of course, the support of religion, which the Christian minister of all men should not forget, and which I doubt not I shall reach ere I am through. And yet I know that there are those to whom appeal to this seems practically a confession that there is no help in us; whose attitude of mind is not far from that of the mother of Mary Somerville, who though very timid of the sea once ventured a short voyage upon it. There was a stiff gale, and the waves to any but sailors' eyes rolled high. At length the captain, having knowledge of her fears and willing to tease her, sent her word that they must put their trust in Providence. "Why, mercy!" exclaimed the devout but terrified old lady, "has it come to that?"

Perhaps it were better for us to take Heaven into our reckoning together with the conception of means of relief which it is the will of Heaven for us to lay hold upon, and which we are disobedient to Heaven if we neglect. Our problem is, "How under

the doom of suffering we may suffer most nobly; how with such an affliction we may best maintain our poise and serenity. One of two things is certain: we must be miserable in consequence of deafness or happy in spite of it. It is a cross that will crush us unless we valiantly stand erect under it. It is a cloud that will settle more and more densely over us, bereaving us and those about us of a needful and rightful joy, unless through its folds we can send out from ourselves an irradiating smile. By what ordering of our conduct can we best keep ourselves in the better way?

1. There are certain alleviations of our burden, immediate and practical, which we can lay hold upon.

(1) The first is negative in its character, but not the less real for that. It is a divorce from association with this infirmity of an unreasoning and harrowing sensitiveness respecting it. We recall that Beethoven could not bring himself to say, "Speak louder; I am deaf;" and multitudes meet this calamity with the like shrinking. More than

this, very many, probably the large majority, of those smitten with this infirmity try long and hard to conceal it. So they add to their misery an anxiety lest others discover it which is hardly less tormenting. It would seem as though the one burden were hard enough, but they take to themselves another that presses not less heavily. Nay, I suppose that many deeply feel, and not unfrequently they openly confess, "I could bear this blight, but its exposure I cannot bear." They treat it as a disfigurement which they must keep from view, and to this end watch and strive as anxiously as if their personal honor were in jeopardy. Many from the discipline of affliction throw off this sensitiveness at last; but many carry it all their lives, — their greater misery, not their deafness, but the consciousness of its publicity. Those harrowed and striving thus may well be asked to bring before their minds the question, To what advantage is this? It does not make the deafness less; rather, like any other worry or anxiety, I suppose it may tend to make it more; and only for a little

while or to a very slight extent can it be kept from view. In your very struggle to conceal it, you only advertise it. In tacitly requiring those about you to treat you as they treat one another, you make plain to them the measure of your loss: while seeking to meet you as you would have them, they gauge your misfortune by the effort you exact of them. A trumpet at your ear would not more plainly declare deafness than do your own looks and bearing in ten minutes of casual conversation with you. You flatter yourself for a time that your infirmity is not detected, while among those about you it is a theme of common remark. Or, though conscious that it is known, you think that you will thus lessen the impression of it, while your course is of all courses the best one to convey that impression to the fullest. It seems like a self-imposed and onerous tax to an end of impossible realization. Nay, worse than this, it seems the cultivation of an enfeebling sorrow when there is need of a healthy spirit to sustain a loss. The wiser course, the wiser as by far

the easier, is the frank confession, "I beg pardon, but I am quite deaf and cannot hear you." There is often, indeed, a stage of deafness at which it may be made unnoticeable by a little care, just as by a little care in dress a wart or wen may be kept from view; and in such cases that little care, which may be dictated by consideration for others as well as for one's self, is not only justifiable but beautiful. Of course, too, it always becomes one afflicted with this infirmity to be as alert as possible, so that others need not be unnecessarily taxed by it. Here is plainly application of the Golden Rule, from the divine requirement of which the deaf may plead no exemption. But beyond these very obvious rules of conduct, the effort at concealment is both burdensome and vain. By all such sensitiveness you are more encumbered and less happy. It may require a considerable effort of will to give this infirmity frank acknowledgment; but once done, twice done, thrice done (and, it having become an obtrusive and serious fact, the earlier the better), a weighty concern drops

away, and you take your infirmity into the world with you as you take a diminutive stature, or irregular features, or gray hair, — defects from which you would undoubtedly like exemption, but which you regard as a part of yourself, and therefore do not chafe under. You cease then to be sensitive lest others shall know of the handicap which you openly avow; and so are at peace where before you were a worried and an anxious man.

This sensitiveness thus faced and overborne, one may then be in an attitude of mind in which to avail himself of a very practical help in hearing, — I mean the ear-trumpet. The use of this does certainly in a way advertise deafness; yet still, friend, you are no deafer because you have it, only much easier to approach. In declining such an aid, it looks as though sensitiveness were verging close on foolishness. I was at first unwilling to take a trumpet, though mainly from suspicion that by relying upon it my hearing would be still further impaired. At length, however, I took one, and at once found

the way of life so much easier that it became perfectly evident to me that it must be helpful to hearing rather than injurious. Indeed my aurist told me that that would be the natural tendency. Close listening, as all deaf men know, is very wearisome, if prolonged; and that aural weariness tends to aggravate deafness any aurist will tell you. By the aid of a trumpet one may listen longer with far less fatigue, and so even if of no potency to restore hearing, it is an economy of what one has. The sensitiveness against which we inveigh, therefore, stands opposed to an advantage which we have hardly a right to forego. Another comfort I found in it. Before I took it, others must make an effort to converse with me, which was often a source of deep regret to me. With the trumpet at my ear their labors were lessened and so my happiness promoted. As with me, I see not why it should not be with others. Take a trumpet, fellow sufferer, by all means.

With this advice, however, I should couple a word of caution. Many, having

determined to take a trumpet, will go to a shop where aural instruments are sold, and try one after another till they come upon the one that seems best to suit them. This is unwise, for the simple and obvious reason that while probably all trumpets are acoustically good, many are aurally bad. They help to hear, but they impair the hearing. One, too, that might do for another may not be well for you. In this matter seek the advice of an aurist and abide by his counsel.

It is hard to understand the reluctance of great numbers of the deaf, among them men and women held capable of wise views of conduct, to employ this practical help. It advertises the deafness indeed; a deaf man among strangers who did not speak to him might not be suspected deaf if a trumpet did not declare the fact. Let one speak to him, however, and the infirmity would be at once apparent. In the circle of one's acquaintance and as far as his name is spoken this affliction is known. How many in the village where I live or in the church where

I worship would suppose me to have good hearing did not my trumpet proclaim the contrary? Some shrink from the trumpet because they do not like the looks of it; and that it is not ornamental must be confessed. However, many other things are not ornamental with which we are in daily association, and which we cheerfully accept for their utility; and why not the trumpet, than which, for the extremely deaf, nothing else can be more conducive to comfort and convenience? Should it please the powers of the universe to cause horns to sprout on my forehead, I think I would cheerfully accept them if good hearing came with them. I do not desire horns; I very much prefer ears; but I so much desire easy and natural communication with my fellows that a mere matter of personal appearance seems a trifle too small to be considered in the comparison. Harriet Martineau, writing of her early experience of deafness, says, "Nine tenths of my miseries arose from false shame;" and as she testified, so I suppose that multitudes in their recoil from the

trumpet, if their ultimate reason were confessed, would testify. But false shame, in dealing with the hard realities of life, wears a foolish look. It is something not to be deferred to, but resolutely faced and put down. What are intelligent natures given us for if not for intelligent dealing with ourselves? The standard which we set up for a rational being implies that he will coerce pride, suppress passion, restrain appetite, and act from reason; and while from the consciousness of shortcoming we may look upon a measure of departure from this standard with extenuation, we are yet morally forbidden to look upon it with approval. That it is unworthy of an intelligent being is the least we can say of it. In our dealing with ourselves false pride, like unruly passions and unhealthy appetites, is not to be conciliated but conquered. And it is worthy of remark how much easier is the way of life when, pride put by, conditions which we cannot welcome are yet openly accepted. We have then nothing unreal to maintain, and can take without shrinking or even self-

consciousness whatever help shall further us. We think with contemptuous pity of those who will incur debt, shrink from honorable toil, and resort to all manner of crooked diplomacies, to maintain a social standard. Their case we may admit to be hard, but only because they deeply prefer a fictitious appearance to a substantial peace, — like so many others, — ourselves, fellow sufferers, how often! Benjamin F. Butler once made a rude remark to Victoria C. Woodhull, then hovering on the edge of politics, to which she brought a very questionable notoriety. "If you are going into politics, madam, I advise you first of all to lose your character. I lost mine many years ago, and have been perfectly happy ever since." The precise meaning of this remark we will not stop to inquire; I simply draw it to myself at its face value, and say that, having no hearing to speak of, my happiness is very greatly promoted by the suppression within me of all pride respecting it. I am thus enabled to carry my condition on the surface, and employ the one aid it calls for without a

qualm. And as with me, fellow sufferers, so it may be with you.

There is another help of a very practical nature which I wish also to commend. There is a woman of my acquaintance who is quite deaf, who yet moves in society with grace and freedom. Quite deaf, I say, deaf as many who find society scarce tolerable because of deafness; and yet with a group of people about her she converses with such ease that a stranger would often not suspect her to be deaf at all. What is the explanation? Why, nothing were easier; she hears with her *eyes*. That is to say, she makes her eyes take the place of ears. In other words, she practises lip-reading. The things which others say she reads off from their lips while they are speaking.

This is something which many deaf people do to some extent. They soon learn that by watching lips they catch more easily what is said to them, and so learn almost unconsciously something of lip-movement in word formation. That of which they thus gain an inkling has been developed into an art,

and is now taught in institutions as systematically as music. There is such an institution in Boston, another in Northampton, another in Portland, Maine; and others are springing up here and there. So successfully is this art taught that the deaf and dumb are qualified to take in the conversation of those about them; they even go to church and intelligently follow the minister in his sermon, or to the theatre and understand the play.[1] This art may not be of possible acquisition to all. Those of dim eyesight, or whose observation is dull, or whose faculties have begun to decay, might find it beyond them. But probably the great majority of the deaf might learn it if they were resolutely to undertake it. As to

1 A little time ago, seeking knowledge of this matter, I visited one of these institutions, and conversed with the principal. Among other questions which I asked was this: "Suppose your better trained pupils transferred to a lecture-room at Harvard College, where Professor Royce, say, is lecturing on philosophy, and using such words as *a priori*, consciousness, phenomena, epistemology, etc., — words utterly foreign to them, — would they be able to read them from his lips?" The prompt answer was, "They would." Severer test could hardly be conceived than this.

the length of time required, that, as in learning anything else, must depend on aptitude and industry. As I am told by one engaged in teaching this art, a few lessons may be taken, and then considerable progress made by the steady application of them. After that, more lessons as convenience may permit. If, however, one will take it comprehensively and thoroughly, without intermission until the task is accomplished, a tuition of two years is named as the approximately needful one. Think of it, man or woman of thirty, with thirty-five good years before you ere the twilight comes! Two years for the lad whom responsibilities are awaiting! Two years for the girl with all life before her! Think of the increased resource, the broader freedom, the more winning grace, the less clouded happiness; and then ask Duty for a judgment as to your conduct respecting it. Such an accomplishment within practicable reach, the question may seriously be asked if one can find moral justification for the neglect of it. The time, two years, — you

shake your head dubiously at thought of that. Four or five years for music we willingly grant; four or five years for foreign languages we allow and make no complaint; two years for travel, if the exchequer will provide it. But here is something which surpasses all these in practical value to such as need it. A university degree to the son who has good ears is worth far less than this accomplishment to the daughter smitten with deafness; and yet two years, — how can such a period be spared for it? It costs money also. The institutions of which I have spoken are of State provision, and so are free to all coming to them from within the State. They are designed for the more general education of deaf children, and lip-reading is resorted to as a means to this end. The art, however, is taught by private teachers, and they charge fairly for their labor. But on what terms do you arrange with the teacher of elocution, with the French teacher, with the boxing-master, with the fencing-master? Of course I say nothing of luxuries or personal indulgences.

These must be, and only unreasonable moralists and foolish ministers take reckoning of them. I do, however, call attention to the tolerant view with which we meet the exactions of other forms of education, and plead that this form be embraced within it. It is with a peculiar feeling that I write thus. In my preaching days it was not unfrequently my own sins that I brought to judgment, and now in a retrospective way I am doing the same again. This art was brought to my notice a quarter of a century ago, and, instead of putting forth a resolute effort to acquire it, I put it away from me. My profession was exacting as to my time, and in my spare time — well, I read Spinoza. The money consideration, too, counted for something, for I was heir to poverty and was living on my patrimony. I see it now as a means of grace that I neglected; and the thought of what it might have meant to me gives fervor to my words as I write of it. I offer my example as a good one not to imitate.

There is another help which I feel con-

strained to commend. It is not a means that we can lay hold upon, but a self-restraint which we may exercise. We have quoted the advice of Beethoven's physician that he spare his hearing, — advice which any aurist would pronounce wise, and which we have found reason to justify in the weariness which close and prolonged listening is sure to occasion. If weariness, however, were all the consequence, we might consider it no serious matter, for then rest would restore us. But attendant upon the fatigue is an increase of head noises, and from these, when extreme, nervous excitement and mental depression are almost sure to follow. The frugal use of hearing, therefore, is of much importance to the deaf, and rules of conduct with reference to this should be carefully considered.

We come here to one or two very definite relations of the deaf man with his fellows. He is often pressed to attend the public meeting and may like to do so. Its interest — politics, reform, letters — may be his interest. He may even feel it a duty to be

there, in order to swell a rank or testify his sympathy. This is well enough so far: doing things to be seen of men may sometimes be very commendable. The effort to follow debate or address, however, is not surely wise. For the little he receives the price he pays is too great by far. I say the little he receives; for where the effort to hear is great it is scarce possible to understand. One may like to go to church, — I do; it is one of the pleasures which I am unwilling to deny myself. I have learned the wisdom, however, of taking my minister for granted: while he gives his message I pay no heed. For me is the worship, the atmosphere, and the fact that the God who seeth in secret both heareth and speaketh in silence.

Of course it is seen that the consideration that rules my mind is one of practical expediency: how shall the deaf most easily bear the heavy load which it is appointed them to carry? The question of their relation with society comes before us here: Shall they keep in society or hold themselves on the

outside of it? On no point are they more likely to be labored with than on this; any tendency which they may manifest to withdraw from society is met with the protests of friends who see in the isolation only a sacrifice self-incurred. Even Harriet Martineau, whose word on this subject should certainly have weight, speaks of society as "the first thing we are tempted to give up" and the "last thing we ought to relinquish." To this question, however, I think there are two sides. One who is deaf may have duties in society; if so, by all means let him discharge them, even though the tax be heavy. But as respects the ordinary social functions — calls, clubs, balls, receptions — experience should be the mentor. If he finds pleasure or solace in them, and no unhappy consequences follow from them, why, by all means, let him keep to them. The gain is much, and there is no countervailing outlay. But if the effort to bear a part be wearisome, if the talk and bustle and laughter are a distraction and an irritation, if nervous exhaustion is a consequence, and, following

that, insomnia and mental depression, why, to stay away is the part of duty as of practical wisdom. It was a saying of Thoreau's that he did not care to make a martyr of himself unless it was very necessary; in this case one makes a martyr of himself to no needful end. The outlay is much, and the counterbalancing gain not worth mentioning. His burden is very heavy at the best, and he adds not slightly to its weight. It seems to me that as a rule a loss that involves so serious a social incapacity makes a good measure of social isolation a condition of the healthier and the happier life. Duty, too, we may do well to remember, is many-sided; or rather it is a generic term in which manifold duties are embraced. So we come at last to Goethe's maxim, "Do the duty that lies nearest to thee." That nearest duty most likely lies in relation with your family, with your business; and you can only discharge it worthily as you meet it with serenity. When answering the calls of society unfits for nearer obligations, it becomes dissipation, not duty.

The conduct thus far commended is conceived as at the outside of life; it is practical and, barring exceptional cases here and there, it is practicable. The sensitiveness by which many are so tortured at thought of making this infirmity manifest can be shaken off. A resolute effort of will, followed by frank even though forced confession twice or thrice, and it is gone. The trumpet which pride forbids, one may conquer pride and take. The lip-reading is not, indeed, for all, nor is it accessible to all; but such as have yet the aptitude to acquire it and are within reach of it have only themselves to blame if they neglect it; and they are ruled by a very questionable economy if they balance dollars or days against it. Society seems to lay exactions upon us, but we are not necessarily its slaves; and, taking rightful account of our infirmity, we may elect our way with respect to it. I say *may*, and, in commending all these helps, that is my word expressed or implied. Deep in my mind, however, there is a *should;* the appeal to obligation, the summons to duty, is none

too strong. To bear this infirmity and not sink under it, to bear it and at the same time be useful men and women, is the achievement set before us ; and the helps to this which sound reason and experience may commend, it may be of our perversity but not of our right to put by. The world has still a stake in us ; and in the high court of morals the judgment must be against us if from the neglect of any means of relief we defeat its hopes.

But there is another order of help that claims our notice. Into the outer darkness it is possible to carry an inner light; through resources of mind even deafness may be comforted.

There is a contrast which has been often before my mind, and of which the suggestions are manifold. Any one familiar with rural life will easily call before his mind a farmer who some years ago took up his work with a small outfit of knowledge to which he has added little, and a stock of prejudices which he has intensified. If interested in religion, he reads a weekly

paper devoted to his sect; if in politics, an organ of his party; but with the great movements of the world he is out of touch. Books have no charm for him: so far as he is concerned, it would be all the same had historians never written and poets never sung. In his daily routine he deals with the materials of half a dozen sciences, yet are they only soil and rocks and animals and pests and weeds to him. His forest lies fair in the landscape, but it is only wood and timber in his eye; the flowers greet him in all his fields, but

> "A primrose by the river's brim
> A yellow primrose is to him,
> And it is nothing more."

Of course with difference of detail I might draw the like picture of men engaged in many crafts and callings, — men who meet routine of life without any counterpoising intellectual interest, and are smothered in it. Here now is another picture drawn from the life. Travelling once in Southern California, I found my way to a ranch in a secluded

valley. Secluded we indeed should think it in this land of villages and railroads, — twenty miles from any centre of trade, with a single store, which was also post-office, five miles away, visited by a stage every other day. There was no church within practicable distance; there were two or three neighbors a mile or two away. I met the proprietor in his vineyard. His garments were of the coarsest, and his features were browned with exposure. But his speech was accurate, his statements clear; and at once I saw the unmistakable signs of a trained intelligence. Within his house, very primitive but neat and orderly, his centre-table showed him a subscriber for three or four periodicals of the higher order, also three or four newspapers, representing his own State, New England, New York, the middle West. His library attracted my special interest. Here were Euripides and Plato, here were Horace and Tacitus; here were the higher manuals of several sciences; works on philosophy, political economy, history, literature, which told of a student

of the latter day. It was with a son of Harvard that I was dealing. Into this isolation he had brought this resource, into this loneliness this companionship. As I talked with him, I found his mind adjusted to the great problems of the day, — philosophy, theology, trade, finance. He could discuss the Negro and the Chinaman, Cleveland and Bismarck and Gladstone, in the light of history, of political economy, of international polity. His industry was conducted in the light of science: his soil was chemistry, his weeds were botany, his pests were entomology, his rocks and the hills about him were geology. Into his toil he carried the memory of the lecture-room where the great problems had been laid before him; in his evenings he could meditate with Plato; he could beguile any weariness with the beat of Homer's rhythm.

The difference between the two may be concisely stated thus: while the former is below his circumstance, the latter is above it. In the one case the man is smothered; in the latter he is supreme. And this dif-

ference is implied in the difference in intellectual resource. The latter was a free citizen of the world of ideas, the former was restricted to a hermitage. The one would be isolated in any throng, the other would people any solitude. Give the former all Commonwealth Avenue and he would be provincial; doom the latter to the Mohave desert and he would still be urban. Very likely he welcomed the pressure of a hand and loved the sound of voices; but though deprived of these, with the wand of intelligence he could gather the noble of the world around him. To be deprived of the contact of men may not be the happiest estate, but it is no intolerable fate to one so endowed.

The illustration runs far beyond what is for most, yet it bears in upon us a suggestion of something very desirable and not impossible. We cannot prescribe a university degree as a consolation for deafness; but a fresh intellectual interest might very often be prescribed, and it should uplift and comfort in proportion to its earnestness.

Let me illustrate somewhat discursively. You are not in any broad meaning of the word educated, and have no definite and absorbing intellectual interest; and this isolating and depressing infirmity is creeping upon you. You cannot cure it, and, taking an honest inventory of your resources, you are compelled to admit that you have not that within you wherewith to console it. It happens, however, that you have a human fondness for flowers. Suppose you set yourself earnestly to the task of learning something definite about them. The science of botany is not a difficult one; in a few weeks one may find his way into it, though all the years of one's life are not enough to exhaust it. A few weeks, and the fields and the meadows, the hill-top and the brook-side are your endless resource. You are a man or woman of many tasks; but having earnestly taken up this interest, you may find space in the by-play of life to carry it forward. In a little time the flowers shall greet you with surprises in the field when you toil and by your path when you walk.

And not the flowers only: the grasses in their infinite profusion, the weeds in your garden, the alders by the brook-side, the forest, every tree of which has a tale of wonder to tell. They become a healthful substitute for the social gossip that is denied you, and a diversion from the anxiety that oppresses you. Isolated with respect to your fellows, you have gained enfranchisement in a great province of nature. Society may hold aloof from you; here on any heath is welcome and smile. I once took a walk with Asa Gray in a cañon of the Santa Ynez Mountains which almost tempted me to turn from my own pursuits and embrace his. Our walk was very slow because of the wonders which his trained eye saw, and which he simply could not pass without pausing to contemplate and admire. On rocks where I saw nothing at all what marvellous growths did he discover! At length we came to some rocks that to my eyes were as bare as the underpinning of the church now building near me. "I do not think you will find anything here, pro-

fessor," said I. "I am not so sure of that," he replied. "Let us sit down." We sat down on one of the rocks; and in the three feet between us he pointed out sundry lichens that were growing there, and lavished on me his eloquent account of them. I recall this by way of suggesting the wonders that are awaiting you, when your eyes are opened, on the ledgy hill or in the worn-out pasture before your window.

Or, suppose your stronger drawing to be not to botany but to geology. This is perhaps a more formidable science; but a course of lectures, the intelligent reading of a manual or two, will open its door to you. And now the rocks, the hills, the sea-shore, the mountain gorges, and the river valleys entice you to their stupendous record. Look where you will upon nature, your eye cannot fall where the wonderful hieroglyphic is not inscribed. An open pipe-drain has fairy tales to tell; chalk and coal, gravel and peat, things so familiar become as things which you have never seen before. Once, a pupil of Professor Agassiz, I carried to

him a stone which I had picked up by the wayside. I wished to ask him a question respecting it, but had to struggle with a reluctance to do so, fearing that I should thus reveal the nothing that I knew of it. He gave me his resistless welcome and proceeded to tell me of that stone. For twenty minutes his talk went on, — such talk! such talk! Of course what he told was primer to him, for I was in the primary school of his science, not safely through the alphabet. But Professor Agassiz's primer — what a book it was! I suppose there are stones as wonderful in any yard or stone-wall which I may pass, that I might pick them up in any walk to the post-office if only I had a little more of that primer, and that this old town whose roadsides and pastures I look on so indifferently would be a region of enchantment to me.

Or entomology may hold out to you the more alluring promise. Embrace it, then, embrace it heartily, and after the necessary period of preparation, — necessary, I say, though not laborious,— the fly and mosquito,

the moth and beetle, the worm and caterpillar, will enlarge you and enrich you and divert you through the revelation of their life and function. You demur at this, thinking it some great task I would impose. Not so. It is not a qualification for a university professorship that I contemplate, but a stimulating and healing interest in things immediately about you, the way to which, if exacting, is not hard. It would cost time, you say. Indeed it would; but what did your carriage cost you, what did your trip to Niagara cost you, what did your accumulations in the savings-bank cost you? It would cost you time, and duties are many, and time is a prime condition of performing them; but possibly not more time than you now spend over the commonplace novel or the commonplace newspaper, or in moping over the hardness of your lot in the infirmity that has come upon you.

But scientific tastes are not yours, you say. Your drawing is to man, the creations of his heart and brain. Well, then, here is

literature, — history with its shining page, the novel with its boundless riches, the essay with its great enlightenment, biography with its heroic record, poetry with its inspiration and its joy. Somewhere here is your province; enter into it, nothing doubting that you shall find the consolation you are seeking. Take with you, however, this most friendly caution. Literature is a mine to delve in, not a race-course to trot over; and it will bless you almost in proportion to the time you earnestly linger over it. I use the word "linger" with care, meaning to press home if I can its natural suggestion. Tarry with an author as you would tarry in a pleasant country, from simple unwillingness to detach yourself from his light and joy. There is a question which one often hears in literary small talk, which from its uniqueness is suggestive. People will ask you, Have you read Ruskin? Have you read Dickens? Have you read Macaulay? Have you read Tennyson? As their thoughts turn towards Concord, however, they speak in another tense: *Do* you read Emerson?

There is a tacit assumption here that you treat Emerson as you treat your Bible, ever reading him but never done with him; also the assumption that you treat other authors much as you treat the towns on an extended railway, passing through them and leaving them. This is as it should be as respects Emerson; I only wish we could confidently ask the like question respecting other authors: *Do* you read Longfellow? *Do* you read Holmes? *Do* you read Goldsmith or Bacon or Shakespeare or Milton? Do you cleave to a few authors as favorites and friends, in quietude of spirit imbibing their sunshine? Thus to do is to find the consolation of literature, the thing we are now in search for, as it cannot otherwise be found.

There is a very possible and extremely useful intensification of this practice. I know a man whom fortune has treated with great severity. About midway in life he became blind. Other infirmity came upon him; for many years he has been helpless or nearly so. Happily, however, in earlier

years he had been a diligent reader of literature of the higher order, and had stored his memory with quotations from the authors whom he loved. As infirmity came upon him, friends read to him; and so he increased his store. He must now sit apart, but at call what company can he gather around him! He cannot read the newspaper, but in place of it he can have Browning's song and Emerson's starry wisdom. Few are called to experience the measure of his physical affliction; but, thus upheld and nourished, rarely will you meet a serener soul. Palsied limbs are not to him, blindness is not to him, when in the "joy of elevated thought." Here, as it is in part out of my own experience that I am trying to speak to others, I may dare to say that I am telling of a help of which I have proved the value. Endowed with a memory that absorbs easily, I have gathered from my reading a store of quotation that is considerable, and in more recent years, coming upon things that I have especially enjoyed, it has been often my practice to linger over them

till I can recite them, in preparation for emergencies that are sure to come. Sometimes as I walk, my ears roaring like a volcano, I can beguile myself from the thought of them by the silent recitation of some loved poem. In the night, too, when these noises will not let me sleep, I can often solace the long hours in like manner. Often when away from books, the depressing sense of infirmity creeping upon me, I can find refuge in "Saul" or "Woodnotes" or "Tintern Abbey." In church, while the minister preaches, my mind is not unlikely on the heights of Emerson's or Browning's poetry. Some, not fond of church, may think this profitable exchange. No, no, no! My minister is no Emerson, as neither was Emerson my minister. Thank God for Emerson; but my minister is *another* man, with a message of his own and a heart-throb that gives it unction; and for that brief half hour I would gladly give Emerson for him. All will agree, however, that as I cannot have my minister, Emerson is better than nothing. I wish I could hear the sermon,

but by thus ordering my conduct I am spared the vacuous and listless mind; and I am sure I am not unworthily occupied when meditating the great lines of the "Problem" or the "Threnody." A resource that means so much to me, it is very pleasant to commend.

But there are not a few to whom neither science nor letters makes appeal; their interests are more distinctly practical. Here, then, is your Country or your State with its multifarious and complex affairs. Suppose you single out some one of these and bring to it an active mind. Here is our tariff system, for instance: suppose you plunge into it with intent to know, really *know* something about it; taking not the word of the party henchman or the party organ, but going to the volumes of its sober and unpartisan expositors, whence light, not darkness, comes. Here is a problem of endless ramifications, which leads through long tracts of history, which brings into contact with the noblest intellects, and which has important relations not only with our public,

but also with our private ethics. Or here is our financial system, a region of darkness to most of us, which rival demagogues are doing their best, or rather worst, to make darker. Go behind them to the real teachers, with whom you will be in contact with real knowledge and honest thought. The study may not make you a financier, but you may gain from it an awakened and enlightened mind. Or here is the complex system of our internal revenue; here is our penal system, which brave intellects are toiling to reform; here is our educational system, so vast in its scope, so essential to our welfare, from its contemplation so illuminating and enlarging and encouraging; here is the problem of capital and labor, the immigration problem, the Indian problem, the Negro problem. Here are our charitable institutions, — the Golden Rule applied; our natural productions, — coal, iron, gold, silver, copper, lead; our agricultural productions, — wheat, corn, cotton, wool; the great inventions that are playing such a part in our industrial life, — the steam-

engine, the telephone, the telegraph, all within reach of the earnest mind, all opening into rich realms of knowledge, in the pursuit of which, fellow sufferer, poor hearing is no absolute barrier, and in which for blissful hours it may be forgotten. Try it for a season and you shall surely find that an absorbed mind is a comforted infirmity. You may complain that the long inventory has a superfluous look. For letters, possibly so; but holding in mind the diverse interests of those for whom these pages are intended, I must think otherwise. I am reminded here of an experience of E. H. Chapin, who once entered a railway coach and took a seat beside a stranger. Dr. Chapin was a good talker, accustomed to dealing with all varieties of mind, and undertook to lure his companion into conversation. One after another he called up the topics of common interest, — the weather, the scenery, the crops, the politics, the productions of the regions through which they were gliding, but to no avail; the man respectfully listened but would not talk.

The Doctor did not like to be defeated in a province where he was a master, and determined to call out the man; but his wit and wisdom elicited no response. At length Dr. Chapin must leave the train, and, turning to the man, he asked him if he could explain why it was they had been unable to converse with each other. The man gruffly answered, "Why did n't you take hold of me on *luther?*" He was interested in leather, and could have talked about that. In this enumeration I am trying to come to leather, — the leather of your interest, that is.

But you are not one to use books, are simply a worker in the world and employed upon its ruder tasks, and an intellectual interest seems beyond you. There may be those not accounted fools who in no degree are capable of this, — *may* be, — I do not like to say. Intellectual interest is of many ranges, and small intellect may be very active in its plane. I once knew a boot-maker, a very lowly man, as we reckon. I am not certain that he could

read and I am quite sure he could not write. Of the interests so absorbing to most of us, — social arrangements, church, trade, education, politics, he knew nothing. Ah, yes; let me recall. He *did* know something of politics. He knew the party to which he belonged and how always to support its ticket, — a good deal if we judge by the standards of men accounted wise, — ministers, lawyers, men of letters, editors and members of Congress, the mighty sum of whose vast knowledge comes to precisely this.

His one dominating interest, however, was his trade, and he had a genuine ambition to perfect himself in that. To make a boot of neatest fit and trimmest shape and stoutest build was the aim of his ambition, and so a matter of serious study with him. He had a theory of edges, a doctrine of shanks, a philosophy of heels, and these he was constantly meditating and unfolding. Not only skill in handicraft engrossed him, but the materials used in it, as in finishing and treeing, kinds of leather and methods

of tanning, came as weighty matters before him, and he seriously and thoughtfully considered them. It seems a small interest, but his untutored mind found scope in it. In his little sphere he was an artist and felt himself such; and to talk an hour with him was to carry away an enlarged sense of the scope of knowledge that the study of a pair of boots may lead to, and of the artistic delight that might be realized in fashioning them. This man was poor and he was not well, but in boot-lore he found consolation. With mind seriously occupied with that one interest, small as it was, his lowly station and his slender purse and his physical frailty could not overpower him. By virtue of that interest he lived apart from them and above them.

You have only a small piece of land to cultivate. You have not scope then for the large enterprises of a California ranch; and you have opportunity to become the merest clod, if you will. But there is surely opportunity there to be something else. To cultivate that soil, not mechanically but

wisely, to search out the best methods of dealing with it so as to realize the largest return from it, is not a matter of hands alone; a brain must be exercised, and that earnestly. A number of sciences come together there; and though you may never know them as the books unfold them, all your success depends upon the wisdom of your practical dealing with them. If you cultivate this piece of land as an irksome makeshift for your daily bread, using only hands trained to do as other hands have done, — are one animal as your horse is another, — why, you may get bread, but surely little more. But if you will bring to your labors an active mind, seeking through them not merely bread but wisdom also, are eager not merely to cultivate your field but to know it too, here is scope for an intellectual satisfaction which the period of a human life cannot exhaust. As you toil on, your ringing ears may be forgotten, and though oft baffled you may be comforted.

You are a woman with just a home to

care for, and that a small and poor one; the wife of a man of toil who brings home little money and much fatigue and too much impatience. Society is not for you, and in the use of books you are untrained. Within these four walls and in close contact with them you must find whatever satisfaction there is for you; and here is the torment of this infirmity. I cannot say that your outlook is a cheerful one, but I will say it is not a hopeless one. At any rate, here is opportunity for a brave endeavor which may help you even in the putting forth. If you allow yourself to be merely a domestic drudge, there is indeed little hope for you: your physical ill will have no counterpoise in that wearying service; in that routine of cooking and washing and mending you may have the satisfaction that results from being simply busy, but no other. But if in that home you will be not merely the servant of its work but the financier of its small expenditures, the genius of its plain comfort, and the artist of its inexpensive beauty, a higher order of satisfaction is for you. You

will call into exercise thought and taste, which while you put them forth react upon you with comfort and cheer. You will be held to an ideal in the charm of which the poorness of your estate must less oppress you. It is a narrow sphere, yet in it there is scope for high aim and brave endeavor, and these shall bless you.

This order of help, of course all see, is not for the deaf alone; it is a prescription for humanity in many estates of suffering and loss. Poverty must often be; infirmity is the lot of man. A refuge from either is a mind well occupied. In physical affliction to turn to the marvels of any science, to experience the delights of any literature, to become absorbed in the pursuit of knowledge, or in high thought, or in noble aim, is like escape from the heat and bustle and repression of a city to the fields of June with their verdure and their flowers. The poor condition abides, but it pertains only to a part of us, and that the least important one. If our bodies are in prison, our spirits

are free. The infirmity does not go, but there are sunshine and fresh air and pleasant sceneries and sweet odors. Such refuge, baffled and tormented, why will we neglect? And yet it is not all.

VIII

HIGHER CONSOLATIONS

VIII

Higher Consolations

IN the forecast of this little volume the last chapter was to have been the concluding one. A preacher, however, cannot easily throw off the wont of his vocation; and, in writing the last few pages, it was borne in upon me that I needed to carry my reflections to a yet higher altitude. We have seen how to counterpoise deafness; our study now is to transcend it.

My thought turns to those nobler sentiments through the cultivation of which we attain our fairer heights. First of all, I bring question as to yourself, — What are you? You answer, I am a man? Are you that? Then, in contemplation of your nature as such, I have a word with you.

You do not always think it, but in affirming that you are a man you differentiate

yourself from all other natures. There may be angels, — you separate yourself from them; there are animals, — you say by implication that you are other than they. And according to your nature is your appropriate conduct. Only a man, there is not expected of you the inconceivable graces of celestial intelligences; being a man, you only act as befits you when you are true to the manly nature as distinguished from that of the animals about you. You think no less of the dog because he is quarrelsome, nor of the fox because he steals, nor of the swine for its predilection for the mire, nor of the snake because it strikes unseen; but when a man takes on doggish or foxy or swinish or snakish habits, you recognize that he has compromised his estate. The lower part degrades him because only a higher part befits him. In comparison with the animals he is king, and in taking on their attributes he exchanges his royal robe for the fool's cap and bells. And it will add a little emphasis to our thought to say that, while nothing is easier than to act beneath the

manly nature, there is no possibility of carrying conduct to ranges above it. The greed of which we see so much is far too low for us, but no self-sacrifice is too high. While in the downward tendency, — in avarice, in cruelty, in cowardice, in treachery, — we see men assimilating inferior natures, at no height of excellence do they leave the manly nature behind them and assimilate superior ones. At the noblest possible they are still men, triumphant men. When Winkelried "made way for liberty and died" at Sempach, his conduct was sublime, but not supermanly. When Sir Philip Sidney, wounded and dying at Flushing, handed the flagon of water that had been brought him to a soldier who was dying near him, in recognition of his greater need, manliness was illustrated, not outdone. When Luther flung defiance to Church and Emperor at Worms, there was simply a man sublimely faithful to himself. And so we ever feel in the presence of high example. All martyr-crowns are crowns of triumphant manliness.

There is food here for high reflection.

At the summits of character man is most truly himself. However humble his station, his birthright is a royal dignity. There is no grace he can conceive which he may not fittingly put on. Now, while few things are more pitiful than the ostentatious assertion of outward importance, there is nothing more healthful than a high sense of the worth of the interior man. The former is an enfeebling vanity; the latter is an ennobling self-appreciation. Of the latter, indeed, comes our conception of honor. We often use the word superficially to give account of what is hardly more than a caprice of conduct; but, deeply studied, it is found to express a sense of what is worthy of a man. The scale of honor is of course a very variable one, exacting all refinements of conduct in the high man, tolerating much that is unlovely in the low man; but ever reflecting the individual's conception of what is befitting his nature. The man of honor may be a very imperfect man; he may have dimness of vision, faults of temper, infirmities of will; but according to the light and

capacity given him he must be true to his dignity as a man. Conduct that in his eyes demeans him, which he perceives to be weak, crafty, cowardly, cruel, unchivalrous, or unclean, he must fight all temptations to indulge. These things, he will say in effect, may do for brutes or brutish men, but from my height I may not stoop to them. This standard of judgment was fundamental in that stoicism from which so many examples of illustrious virtue have come to us. Beyond a doubt the Stoic often laid his emphasis wrongly; he had not the Christian lesson and the Christian's exemplar for his guidance. His virtues were of the masculine type; his model the hero, not the saint; the conqueror, not the martyr. Central in his creed, however, and vital to his working ideal, was the conception of a self-poised and regnant spirit. Human life must ever have the experience of vicissitude: success and failure, gain and loss, health and pain must be its portion. The man, however, in the dignity of his nature should be superior to vicissitude, no joy intoxicating, no tempta-

tion seducing, no loss or grief overpowering. His judgments were especially severe upon surrenders before danger or grief or suffering. Fortitude, as he held, became a man; feebleness or pusillanimity in any form was his defeat and dishonor. This feature of his standard is brought into strong relief in the passage in which Cassius utters his contempt for Cæsar.

"Once, upon a raw and gusty day
The troubled Tyber chafing with her shores,
Cæsar said to me, 'Dar'st thou, Cassius, now
Leap in with me into this angry flood,
And swim to yonder point?' Upon the word,
Accoutred as I was, I plunged in,
And bade him follow: so, indeed, he did.
The torrent roar'd, and we did buffet it
With lusty sinews, throwing it aside
And stemming it with hearts of controversy:
But, ere we could arrive the point propos'd,
Cæsar cried, 'Help me, Cassius, or I sink!'
. . . . . .
He had a fever when he was in Spain,
And when the fit was on him I did mark
How he did shake: 't is true, this god did shake;
His coward lips did from their colour fly;
And that same eye, whose bend doth awe the world
Did lose his lustre. I did hear him groan:

> Ay, and that tongue of his, that bade the Romans
> Mark him and write his speeches in their books,
> 'Alas!' it cried, 'give me some drink, Titinius,'
> As a sick girl."

We with sentiments meliorated by Christian culture would treat these exigencies much less ironically, not unlikely with a manifest charity. Yet we can so far enter into the Stoic's mind as to understand his contempt for a frightened or a whining Cæsar. Nay more, we may make a *whining Cæsar* an expansive formula for what we should not be. Possibly, if we meditate it well, it will distil upon our minds a saving sense of the truth that by the whining, Cæsar is un-Cæsared.

Though often enough rehearsed, it may not be amiss to note here some of the elements of man's distinction. A deer at the scent of danger has no alternative but flight; to take survey of his situation with calm estimate of his perils and his resources is not given him. It is, however, given man. Through the intellect with which he is endowed he can in danger take reckoning of his strength; in loss, of the resources that

are left him ; in suffering, of the happiness that yet remains and of the alleviations that are possible. And to disown this high endowment in the extremities of life, to yield in loss or suffering to an enervating dread or a paralyzing anxiety, is to go the way of the timid and unreasoning animal. This is the essence of cowardice, I suppose, — very pardonable in a deer, but never pardoned in a man ; and the degradation it implies is witness to the high prerogative it disowns. An ailing dog is apt to be a cross one, and a surly snarl and a show of teeth his greeting when you approach him. You cheerfully forgive him ; for since he is a dog he can do no otherwise than let his misery rule him. Man, however, has a moral sense ; and this, not doggishness, is supposed to be his mentor. Conscience is not for prosperity and good health and fair weather only ; and when, turning from its behests, we needlessly fling our suffering upon others, — by our touchiness impair their peace, and by our darkness cloud their light, we abjure our estate as men. A lion, smitten with infirmity, can

only seek his lair, yielding to an instinct which he has no resource to combat. Through the endowment of will, however, such resource is given man. In loss, pain, grief, it is possible for him to stand erect and fight on. If Fate is cruel, he may still defy it. And the examples we most delight to contemplate are those of the suffering yet steadfast.

These endowments — intellect, conscience, will — lift man to his august pre-eminence. As he rules himself by them, and only thus, is his dignity secure.

Now there is something in the consciousness of high estate to withhold one from the weak surrenders. You are not without a protection from doggishness if you vividly realize that by it your manhood is compromised. As you think meanly of yourself, you are nearer to the level of the ills of life; if you carry with you the consciousness that you are king, your conduct will be kingly. Let some clod be afflicted with rheumatism and he will be the valetudinarian whom Emerson would take care never to un-

muzzle. Let the same affliction come to a Marcus Antoninus and he will treat it as pertaining only to his lower nature, and, ruled ever by his higher, go his way without mentioning it. He may not be able to walk as rapidly or mount his horse as easily, but thus the malady will prove only a hindrance which he can bear with equanimity. It may put a torturing fetter on his limbs, but his spirit will be free.

The application of these reflections to the experience which we are considering is not far to seek. Deafness is a serious matter, but, fellow sufferer, the extent to which it will demoralize will depend very largely on the moral altitude at which you hold yourself. If your practical and working conception of your nature is mean, if you conceive yourself but a paragon of animals and not a little lower than the angels, you will be almost sure to live in a vivid and oppressive consciousness of disability; you will feel yourself "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd," your moral energies will be feeble, and you will become morbid and morose and

irritable. But if you will lift yourself to the heights of a man, a being of intellect and conscience and will, who is expected to meet Fate and defy it, and only in heroic virtue acts his part, it may be otherwise with you. Though handicapped by your affliction, you will yet live above it; though you still must suffer, you will suffer with dignity. It is indeed a heavy load that you are called to carry, but it does not seem to me one to which manly shoulders should be unequal. To falter under it has a look of ignominy; to chafe and fret and grow morbid because of it argues a low ideal and a feeble will. Take to yourself the heroism which you honor, and in your own hard exigency be hero. It is a great affliction; but, until all energies are exhausted in the conflict, it seems to me too small to overturn a resolutely defiant man.

Is it asked how one can hold himself up to this altitude? Certainly I know no royal way and can conceive none. First take home the truth that it is the only altitude that befits you, and then simply hold

fast. Vividly conceive the dignities that as a manly nature belong to you, and they shall nerve you to the valorous fight for them.

To reinforce you in this endeavor there are certain inspiring assurances which you are permitted to take home, and which sane reasoning cannot deny you. Your suffering is great, but the proofs of manhood are not more in the things we do than in the burdens that we carry. You would fain be useful, but are cut off from achievement; take thought that none better serve than they who suffer well.

And now, in parting, one further question: Tell me, pray, what is your faith? "I believe in God," you answer. Stop there; other details of your faith might be interesting, but enough for now this supreme confession. Even as to the form of this belief we will make no close inquiry. We will only assume that God is not another name for Fate, but calls before your mind a Wisdom, a Righteousness, and a Love, enchanting the universe and in immediate contact with you and all.

This faith you affirm with a confidence that does not hesitate, and not unlikely you would repudiate with warmth the suggestion that it is not vital to your soul. Forget then for a moment that it is on trial, and turn to the world and maintain it there. Your deafness is a serious matter to you; it would be that, even though you met it with the most reasonable mind. But the probability is that you do not thus meet it; that you construe the world from it; that there is a "melancholy gray" wherever you look because of it. It seems a small datum from which to judge the administration of such large affairs; and you, meeting another with a different infirmity in like attitude of mind, would so reason with him. It is not, however, the size of our infirmities, but their nearness, that here signifies. A very trifling object brought close to the eye will shut out the sun; and your chafing and wailing make manifest the fact that your infirmity obscures your God.

Our pathologies are so engrossing to us that it is often difficult not to feel that the

universe should be judged by them. Hard universe, hard and cruel, that permits these rheumatic aches and dyspeptic miseries and palsied limbs and disordered livers and deaf ears and sightless eyes. Yes, it seems so when, as through a glass darkly, we look at the universe directly through them. But change the point of view; lift yourself to a higher altitude, and look at human sufferings as through the eye of Heaven. The law of the Lord is perfect, says the Psalmist; looking upon the world from this higher altitude, though with all the ills of flesh and spirit in our view, could we not quote him with approval? These ills follow upon laws that cannot be made angry and that cannot be appeased, which execute their commission with no cruelty and also with no pity. Their absolute indifference — as we to them, so ever they to us — there is no denying; and so to some of ardent sensibilities they seem fatelike and remorseless. But here is another aspect of them: the griefs they entail, rightly considered, are witness to their perfection. The fact that we are always

made miserable by the breaking of them is their negative way of showing that in the keeping of them there is blessing. Out of the light must be into the dark; out of the warmth must be into the cold: the issues of obedience and of disobedience simply must be alternative, nor as rational beings would we have them otherwise. "All is well," says an American preacher, "for if there is anything that is not well, it is well that it is not well." It is well that violation of law should not be well; what hope for the world if it were well or could come to well? Sometimes, starting from my infirmity, I have as a problem of thought tried to fashion a world in which it could have no place, and I never yet got far without discovering that it would be a poor affair. There may be in space some planet on which one born as I was born, environed as I have been environed, and living as I have lived, might not be deaf. If so, I would not take it in exchange for this one. I love not my infirmity; but a world in which, its condition being provided, it must follow, would

surely be the world of my choosing. This unrelenting sequence of cause and effect involves serious experiences, but in it is provision for our larger and fairer welfare.

There is a story by which Leibnitz illustrates his optimism. The oracle has made known to Sextus Tarquinius that for the wrongs he shall do he will be driven forth in poverty and exile. Theodorus, a priest of the temple, asks of Jupiter that he explain to him the hard fate of Sextus: why a different will, which should conduct him through other paths to a different issue, has not been given him. In a vision he is taken in hand by Minerva, who shows him the plan of several possible worlds. In one is Sextus rich and happy and honored, yet, as he surveys it, it does not suit him. He is shown another in which is Sextus great and powerful, yet he turns from it dissatisfied. Finally he is shown one that fills him with delight; and is then told that it is the plan of the very world in which he lives, which cannot be without its Sextus.

Deafness, fellow sufferers, is our Sextus;

and it is for us to see that the world would not be so fair without the possibilities of him.

It is a heavy burden that is laid upon us; it is for us to bear it with serenity, if we can. This, however, we can rarely do through energy of will alone; we need to have our minds diverted from it by healthful interests, and our spirits poised above it. A way to both is open, — not a way, indeed, that does not imply effort on our part, yet a way that is clear and inviting. The world of human interests is before us; the heights of character, our nobler appreciations, a reconciling philosophy are wooing us. Let us not be disheartened, let us not surrender; but through buffet and suffering fight on and on. But that we may fight the more valorously, let us stand firm in our manhood and hold fast to our God.

THE END

James Martineau

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